

## The new girl by LPLTVH

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**Summary:**

It's taking place in 1988, the party is in senior year. A new girl arrives in the basket-ball team which intrigues Max.

It's an elmax story and Jane doesn't have superpowers. There will be some characters who are not in the TV show.

# 1. The changing room

## Author's Note:

Hi! If you've been on Wattpad, you've probably already read this story! I'm french, so if you see some mistakes, don't hesitate to tell me! I hope you'll enjoy my story :D Don't hesitate to leave comments :)

The snow was falling and the wind was icing. Like every Saturday, Max and Beverly were going to their basketball training. Max liked this weekly appointment, they really had a team spirit which surprised her as at school they weren't really all friends. The changing room was empty when they arrived. On the left of the door was a big sink with two taps and open showers in a square. On the right was a bench doing the angle with wall hangers above it. All the place was tiled. They saw some clothes on the extrem left of the bench, near the door to the gymnasium. A black leather jacket with spikes was hooked on the coat hanger, a khaki backpack, decorated with pins, with clothes overflowing, and black boots with spikes too, under the bench.

- "I've never seen that kind of clothes before," Beverly said with a frown.

- "Me neither," Max added, grabbing the boots. "Maybe we have a new girl in our team."

- "In December?"

- "Well, I don't know! At least it's not an other girl with girly tastes."

Beverly pouted. Max replaced the shoes, and the two girls got ready, both wondering who was this new girl. Beverly opened a bit the door and slid her head. It wasn't a big gymnasium, there were bleachers on only one side, in front of the changing rooms. The new girl was sitting between two benches, her legs on the bench in front of her.

- "Do you see her?" Max whispered.

- "Yeah, she is on the benches."

- "What does she look like?"

- "Brown long hair in a ponytail. She has old dirty shoes, an horrible long gray short, a...normal white tee-shirt," Beverly answered. "She is listening to music."

- "Does she seem nice?"

- "I don't know, it's hard to tell at this distance."

- "Then, let's meet her."

The two redheads opened the door and walked on the field. They were both stressing, but Max thought it was stupid, this new girl was probably more stressed than them right now. They saw their coach preparing the stuff and saluted her.

- "I will present her to you when everyone will be here," the woman explained with a big bag full of balls in her hands. "You can talk to her if you want."

- "Okay, thanks," Max smiled.

They approached her like if she could attack them at any moment. Max watched the girl before trying anything. She thought she was pretty cute and didn't seem to be a bully which reassured her. She had a long scar on her right arm and on her neck. Beverly pointed her finger until it touched the new girl's cheek. She had a startle and looked at both of them with a frown. Max gave a tap on Beverly's arm to tell her it was weird before miming to the new girl to take off her headphone.

- "Um...hi," Max clumsily began, "I'm Max, and this is Beverly."

The new girl slowly nodded, still frowning.

- "And you, you are..." Beverly told with her eyebrows raised and moving her hands to encourage the girl to answer.

- "Um...Jane," the new girl shyly answered.

- "Then, Jane, welcome to Hawkins," Max greeted, holding out her hand.

The new girl startled and hid behind her hands like to protect herself. She watched between her fingers before moving them slowly when she realised she wasn't going to be hurt.

- "I, I didn't want to scare you, I'm sorry," Max said, taking back her hand.

- "No, no, it's not you..." Jane said, looking at her knees.

- "Okay, um, let's try again then."

Max held out her hand again, a bit slower this time. Jane took it weakly. The two redheads looked at each other with an amused smile. Max shook it slowly and thought Jane was funny and extremely shy.

- "My turn now," Beverly intervened.

The two girls shook their hands too. Max saw a small smile on the new girl's face and couldn't resist to smile too.

- "Did you ever play basket-ball?" Beverly asked.

- "Yes, I play sometimes with my sister".

- "Cool! How did you finish here Jane?"

- "Um...life..." the new girl answered, looking away.

Max nudged Beverly and showed Jane with her chin. The girl was fidgeting a lot and seemed to shudder.

- "What are you listening to?" Max asked with a smile to change the subject.

- "Pink Floyd."

- "Oh cool, I'm not surprised that you listen to this."

- "Why?"

- "We saw your clothes, you've a punk and rock style, and Pink Floyd, it's rock," Beverly added.

Jane nodded with a serious face before looking down at her walkman. The two redheads heard some of the other girls of the team arriving and greeted them. Max turned to watch Jane who had put back her headphone. She didn't know what to think about her, but she was really curious to know more about her. Once all there, they sat on the bleachers while their coach was standing in front of them. They were eight in the team, nine now with Jane, it wasn't in the mentality of the town to let girls do sport.

- "So, as you can see, we have a new partner in our team," the coach began. "Jane, can you introduce yourself?"

Jane gave a corner look to everyone. She seemed really anxious.

- "Um, well, I'm Jane, I'm...no one, just a girl who doesn't like to introduce herself."

Her presentation made chuckle the team which relaxed a bit the new girl. The coach didn't insist but asked the girl to show them her skills in basket-ball. Jane pouted and extricated herself from between the benches. She went in front of the basket and threw the ball. It bounced on the circle and almost hit the coach's head. The woman frowned and threw another ball to her. Unfortunately, Jane dropped the ball on her foot which made it roll on the field.

- "You told me you had already played basket-ball," Beverly frowned.

- "I've never said I was good!" Jane answered.

- "Yeah, you did well!" Max told sarcastically with a smile.

Jane shrugged and went back on the bleachers with a quick walk. She sat shyly and embarrassed again between the benches. The coach began the warm-ups, wanting to forget what they saw, before doing some matches, four against five. Max noticed that Jane was really bad at basket-ball but very athletic, she was not out of breath or sweating a lot.

After two hours, the coach stopped the training. She congratulated

the girls before letting them going to the changing room. Max heard whispering coming from her partners. She turned and saw the girls giving some quick looks to the new girl. Max tapped Jenifer, a blonde girl on her left, to make her stop.

- "What? She is weird," the blonde girl murmured.

- "She is new, she is probably scared to meet a lot of people," Max told.

- "I know, but being weird won't help her, and she is really bad at basket-ball."

Jane was ready, now wearing her punk clothes and her hair styled back. The girl left the room with a quick walk in an heavy silence, under the eyes of the entire team.

- "Even her clothes are weird."

- "I like her style," Beverly intervened.

- "Me too," Clara, a brown-haired girl, added.

- "You always had weird tastes," Jenifer mocked.

The joke relaxed the atmosphere and closed the subject of Jane. Max tried to finish to get ready as fast as possible. She didn't know why, but she was impatient to see Jane again.

## 2. Memories

An other week passed, and Max was getting ready for her training. She was excited, she had lots of questions to ask to Jane but didn't want to seem oppressive or intrusive. No one could drive her so she decided to walk instead of taking the bus. It would relax her even if she didn't know why she was stressed. She sauntered in the cold weather, trampling on the small white coat, organizing her questions.

She was the first one to arrive in the changing room. She hoped Jane hadn't been too hurt because of the girls' reaction last week. Her worries had been cut short when she saw Jane entering the room. She was still wearing her headphone and her punk style, but this time her hair was combed back with gel. The shy girl gave a quick and small smile to Max before going to the same place as the week before. The redhead waited her to put off her headphone before beginning a conversation.

- "Um, hey, I'm happy you came back," Max told.
- "Why wouldn't I?" Jane asked, taking off her jacket.
- "I don't know, we have been rude with you," the redhead answered with a bit shame.
- "I don't care, I don't like people anyway."
- "Really? Why?" Max asked with an amused tone.
- "They...talk!"
- "Oh, okay...You know, it's the base of the society."
- "I know, it doesn't mean I have to. I fuck the society," Jane replied with anger in her voice.

Max was surprised, Jane was so shy and quiet during the first training, and now she was rude and angry.

- "Is everything ok?"

- "Yeah, yeah. I'm tired, don't take it the wrong way."

Max nodded. She was a bit disappointed to not have the opportunity to know more about her. The redhead didn't insist, she didn't want to bother her, understanding that she might want to be alone after last week. Maybe she would be better during the training. While Jane was changing, Max noticed more scars on her body.

- "Are you ogling her?"

Max had a silent startle and moved her hand to her heart like if it was going to stop.

- "Shit Bev, you scared me!" Max grumbled.

Beverly had a small chuckle before saluting Jane who answered with a nod. She questioned Max with her eyes, but the redhead just shrug as an answer.

- "You wanna go to the skate shop after the training?" Beverly proposed.

- "I would love to! But Neil wants me to be home early."

- "Oh shit, this asshole again! You can't sneak out? I mean, you're almost seventeen, you should be able to do what you want!"

- "Next year! I can't wait to go to college!"

- "Yeah, it's gonna be so cool! Even if, I will miss you and the boys," Beverly confessed.

- "We will still be friends (Jane goes to the field) don't worry," Max reassured.

- "She is mad?" Bev frowned.

- "I don't know, she told me she was tired."

- "I hope she won't be a jerk."

- "She is new, give her some times. When I was new, you all hated



me, remember?"

- "Oh yeah, I remember," Beverly chuckled. "But you have a bad temper, and you're so loud!"

- "Fuck you, you are louder than me," Max mocked.

- "Because of you! You have a bad influence on me."

- "Bad influence? You're definitely not exaggerating!"

The two girls kept giggling, remembering Max's first days in Hawkins. Beverly was very excited to see a girl with the same tastes as her but the boys were a bit more reluctant. They wondered if it wouldn't create tension between the two girls. The first days Max was really unsociable which made everyone think she was rude and mean. Joining the basket-ball team was the best idea Max never had, like that she met new people in a smaller context, and met her best friend Beverly.

During the training, Max found Jane more quiet than last week, with an angry face. She tried many times to smile to her or to make her laugh, but the girl was icy. After the two hours, Jane didn't change, she took her stuff and left the changing room as fast as possible, not giving Max the opportunity to talk to her.

- "God, she is in a hurry!" Jenifer joked, which made the others chuckling.

- "Maybe she doesn't like how you all look at her," Max told with an annoyed tone.

- "Calm down MadMax, we just sai—"

- "I heard what you said," Max cut, taking her stuff and leaving the changing room.

### 3. The new year

It was Christmas break, and the party took the habits to spend the new year at Mike's house. They were in his basement, listening to music and playing Trivial Pursuit that Dustin got for Christmas. Mike kept grumbling all the game because he knew just some answers while Dustin and the others were almost always right.

- "It's a stupid game!" Mike growled, pushing the board.
- "Don't be such a bad loser," Beverly mocked.
- "I'm not a bad loser! It's the truth, this game is stupid."
- "Okay Mikey, we got it," Max chuckled.
- "Don't call me Mikey, Maxie," he joked.

The friends chuckled and stopped playing to not get Mike madder than he was.

- "Hey, we didn't tell you that we have a new girl in our team!" Beverly said.
- "Really? How is she? Will asked.
- "She is...not...talkative," Bev pouted.
- "She is new, she is probably impressed by this new life," Max intervened. "And we hadn't been really warm with her."
- "We had been! Not the others but you and me, we were correct with her."
- "Yeah yeah, we didn't really have the opportunity to talk to her neither, maybe next time."
- "Will we meet her?" Lucas asked.
- "Why? You need another girlfriend?" Mike mocked.

- "For the last time, Gabrielle is just a friend!"
- "Yeah, « just a friend », " Dustin added.
- "She doesn't have the name of « just a friend », " Max continued.
- "We all know how it's going to end," Mike told.
- "Shut up, dude! You are bragging only because you are the first one who had a girlfriend, but don't forget it finished after two weeks," Lucas replied.
- "Still the first one!"
- "Guys, we are not a prize for your stupid competition!" Beverly intervened, shocked by their words.

Mike and Lucas both apologized, realising it was a bit exaggerated even if they were saying that in a joking tone.

- "What's her name?" Will softly asked.

They all frowned at him, not understanding what he was talking about.

- "Oh yeah, sorry, in fact I'm actually interested in what the girls were saying."

The boys winced at him while Max and Beverly laughed.

- "It's Jane," Max answered, feeling a strange sensation in her stomach.
- "Like the girl at the shop," Will stated.
- "What?" Beverly frowned.
- "My mom told me there is a new girl working with her sometimes, her name is Jane too."
- "It's a very common name," Mike told.
- "And we are in a very small town," Lucas added.

- "We don't know many Janes," Dustin said.
- "We don't know everyone," Mike replied.
- "Okay guys, I just wanted to tell you we had a new girl in our team, not creating a whole debate to know how many Janes are in town," Beverly chuckled.
- "Don't worry, it's the hormones," Max joked. "A new girl means a new possibility."
- "Don't try to seduce her all in the same time, you're gonna scared her," Bev mocked.
- "Well, Lucas won't 'cause he already has Gabrielle," Dustin said.

Lucas rolled his eyes while the others giggled. They stood to try the arcade that Nancy bought to Mike for Christmas. It was R-Type, and Mike was the only one who had played it. Lucas and Dustin fought to know who would be the first one to try. They all managed to play but none of them beat Mike's highscore, until Max tried.

- "That's why I didn't want you to play, now I'm gonna see MadMax everytime I'll play!" Mike grumbled.
- "Like that I'm sure you won't forget me," Max joked.
- "I hate you."
- "I don't really like you either, so I think that's okay."

Mike and Max began to laugh while the others watched them with desperation. It was midnight, and the friends went outside to do the countdown. They kissed and hugged each other while the fireworks were coloring the sky. The year 1988 was beginning.

## 4. Baseball

The vacation ended, and the party was back at school. The snow fell a lot during Christmas, but the school bus managed to circulate on the roads. Max arrived in running at the building. She wasn't late, but she was clearly not in advance. Her first period was history, one of the only classes where they were all together.

- "You're late," Mike stated.

- "Do you see any teachers in this class?" Max rhetorically asked, sitting behind him.

- "Why are you always late?"

- "Why are you always stupid?"

Mike rolled his eyes before turning to the blackboard while the others were chuckling.

- "I never know if you're serious or not," Will smiled.

- "He can't live without me," Max joked.

- "Oh yeah, clearly not!" Mike sarcastically said.

Max pushed gently his head while the boy was smiling. The arriving of Mr. Smith cut them in their conversation.

- "Goodmorning everyone. Sorry for my late, but I learned this morning that we have a new student here," the man smiled.

Max and Beverly quickly turned their heads to each other.

- "Do you think it's our new girl?" murmured Beverly murmured.

- "It would be so cool," Max told with a smile.

They heard the door closing. Max and Beverly did a high five when they recognised Jane. The new girl was wearing a white tee-shirt with David Bowie on it, put inside blue light jeans inside black boots,

with a black leather jacket and the same khaki backpack the girls saw in the changing room. Her hair was back but not plated.

- "Welcome," Mr.Smith greeted with a smile. "What's your name ?"

- "Jane," the girl answered looking around.

- "Okay, where are you from?"

- "Faaaaaar."

- "Okay," the teacher chuckled. "Take your seat."

Jane mouthed a « thank you » before walking between the rows at the opposite side of the group of friends. She passed next to Troy and his friend who were laughing and pointing at the girl. Jane ignored them and sat at the back of the class, next to the window and behind Troy. The boy was making obscene movements with his pelvis. Max noticed that Jane was a bit hurt and embarrassed by his vulgarity. She watched her friends and understood they noticed too, they were all giving a dark glares to the two boys, hoping he would stop and felt stupid.

- "What do you want, losers!?" Troy asked with a provoking tone.

Max was going to answer, but the teacher intervened before she could. She met Jane's eyes and gave her a small smile. Jane waved back which made the girl a little bit blush. Max spent her first class giving quick looks above her shoulder to watch Jane. The girl was slowly falling asleep against the wall next to her. At the end of the class, the party noticed that Jane was still asleep. They approached her, and Beverly shook her. Jane woke up with a loud snore and wiped the corner of her lips and her left cheek. She looked around before seeing the group around her.

- "Shit shit shit! Did I fall asleep!?"

- "Yep," Beverly answered.

- "Fuck! It was my first class! I'll have to catch up now! You're stupid Jane!" the brunette said, hitting her forehead.

- "Hey it's okay, Mr. Smith didn't even notice, and he is quite boring," Max pouted.

- "It's not the problem, (stands and puts her stuff in her bag) I just...I hate school."

- "Who doesn't!" Lucas joked.

The party lightly chuckled while Jane was finishing to put her stuff inside her bag. Max introduced the boys to the new girl with enthusiasm.

- "What's your next class?" Mike asked.

- "Um... (whatches her schedule) English, room...463..."

- "It's at the third floor, it's indicated," Will explained.

- "Okay, thanks," Jane answered.

She took her bag and left the room with a quick walking. Mike had a stupid smile on his face while the others were all looking at each other with a pout. They left their class to join their next periods, Dustin, Max and Will in Biology, Mike in Technology, Lucas and Beverly in Algebra. Max finished her morning with Geography and was disappointed to not have Jane with her. She joined her friends at the lunch table, watching around to know if she could see the new girl.

- "Can you stop moving your head? You're getting me dizzy!" Mike growled.

- "I'm looking for Jane, I don't want her to be alone for her first day," Max explained.

- "I don't think she is eating here, I saw her going outside," Will told.

- "Oh...okay."

- "Why outside? It's freezing," Lucas frowned.

- "I don't know," Will said. "She is with me in French, she is very

good."

- "Oh that's cool! You're not alone anymore," Beverly smiled. "You have a friend."

- "Yeah, we are not friends yet, but I was happy to see her. She seems cool," the young boy stated.

The party agreed with nods. They began to talk about their possible colleges for the next year. Dustin wanted to have a Master's degree of sciences in video games design in Florida. Lucas wanted to integrate the army, he didn't know if he wanted to work on the technologies part or to become a military, just in case, he was training for both. Will wanted to go to the school of Visual Arts in New-York. Mike had no idea yet, and it was stressing him a lot because all his friends knew what they were doing the next year. Beverly wanted to become a professional basket-ball player, but it was really closed to girls, so she chose to do law studies or journalism. Max's biggest dream was to become a cook chief and to have her own restaurant even if she knew it would be hard because it was a men world, but she liked challenges too. But, in case, she would study psychology if cooking wouldn't work.

Max and Will had sport together after lunch. It was baseball, and Will hated team sport in particular. He was never chosen and was the worse in the entire school. Max saw how stressed he was and told him some funny stories to relax him. They separated to join their changing rooms. Max was almost done changing when she heard someone entering in running.

- "Hey Jane," the redhead greeted.

- "Hey," the other girl answered, breathing heavily.

- "Did you run?"

- "No, I just like making a lot of noises when I breath! You know, to have all the attention on me."

- "Okay, that was a stupid question," Max chuckled. "I see you in there."



Jane gave a quick nod while she was trying to take off her tee-shirt. Max entered the field with a big smile on her face that Will noticed.

- "Jane has sport with us," the redhead told, after noting his face.

- "Oh, cool," Will smiled.

The teacher began to explain what they were going to do while Max was giving quick looks behind her, in direction of the changing rooms. The two teams were almost done, Will chosen in last for Troy's biggest pleasure, when Jane arrived.

- "You're late Jane!" the sport teacher stated. "You'll play in Troy's team."

The girl nodded and joined the others. Max was on the other team, but she was glad to see Jane with Will, at least he wasn't alone. The new girl sat next to him without looking at the others. Will looked at her with a big smile.

- "What?" Jane frowned. "Do have I a booger on my face or something like that?"

- "No! I'm just...happy to have you with me."

- "Really? You barely know me."

- "I like you," Will smiled.

Jane nodded and smiled to him. Will was sure they had a common point, but he didn't want to talk about it for now, not in public. The match between the two teams began, and Jane and Will were still on the bench.

- "I'm really bad at sport," Will told.

- "You are good to other things," Jane answered.

- "I don't know, I'm not bad at drawing," the young boy shrugged.

- "Really? What do you draw?"

- "I don't know...I used to draw the party..."

- "The party?" Jane frowned.

- "Yeah, that's how we call our group of friends. when we were playing D&D we all had a character so I was drawing us in our costumes."

- "And you stopped drawing them?"

- "No, not completely, sometimes I draw them for...you know, nostalgia."

Jane nodded and watched the match. Will didn't care about the match, he was fearing the moment when he would have to play, he knew the others were going to mock him. Maybe Jane would mock him too and saw how weak he was. She probably wouldn't want to be his friend after that.

- "What was your character?" Jane asked, still looking at the field.

- "What?"

- "In your game, who were you?" the girl repeated, looking at him this time.

- "Um, the wise," Will shyly answered.

- "Oh cool, what were your powers?"

- "Fireballs."

- "Awesome, you could burn assholes' faces."

- "Only in my dreams," the young boy joked.

Jane smirked to him with a small laugh which relaxed Will. He felt comfy with her, she had that thing which could reassure anyone here. She was the first person out of the party who showed some interests in what he was saying.

- "Are you good in baseball?" Will asked like if it was the hardest

thing ever.

- "Better than basket-ball," Jane chuckled.

- "Yeah, I heard it wasn't your thing."

- "Definitely not!"

- "Why choosing basket-ball then?"

- "Well, first, to keep me in good shape, and second, mostly because my sister thought it could be a good idea for me to meet new people before school," Jane explained.

- "She was right, you met Bev and Max who are amazing friends," Will stated.

- "Yeah? If you say so."

- "You don't think they are amazing friends? Will frowned, with disappointment in his voice.

- "I've never said that! I don't know them very well, I mean, we had only two trainings together, that's all, but they seem pretty nice."

- "They are, really," Will nodded.

Jane smiled to him and focused again on the match. But Will was sure it wasn't totally on the match she was concentrated, more on some players with something like sadness in her eyes. He was cut in his thoughts by the moment he was fearing the most. He walked with his shaking legs to the first base, holding the bat with a limp hand. He heard Troy and his friend murmuring some inaudible things and laughing. Even if he didn't understand, he knew it was about him. His eyes were looking at his feet, avoiding the other's heavy looks on him. He was feeling them on his shoulders and his neck. He placed himself on the base and looked at the thrower, holding weakly the bat, ready to hit. He was desperately looking for Max, knowing she was there was reassuring him, but she wasn't on the field, or too far, he didn't know.

The thrower sent the first ball. Will missed which provoked laughs

from Troy and some other teens. Second ball. Will didn't even try to hit it. He was too stressed by the others' judgements on him, he couldn't move. He felt like if everyone was laughing at him, murmuring things about him. He felt two hands on his waist and had a startle. He turned to see Jane behind him.

- "Your position is not right. You need to bend a bit your knees...yeah it's better. And your arms (moves his arms), you will have a better balance like that, and don't hesitate to close more your hands but not too much, stay flexible. And when you hit, rotate the top of your body, your arms brought your body in the rotation, you, you move your shoulders before your arms that's why you miss the ball everytime," Jane explained. "Your feet are too in direction of the outside, they need to be more parallel. Try like this for now."

Will was so surprised to see her trying to help him that he didn't say anything, not even a thank you. He turned again his head to the thrower without changing his position. Third ball. He missed again, but he felt different. He didn't know what he was feeling, but it was good. He was out so he went back to the bench. On his way he met Jane who was smiling to him.

- "It was good," the girl encouraged.

- "I missed."

- "But you were better, it was a good progress."

She gave him a tap on his shoulder and placed herself on the first base. He had a bigger smile when he saw Max as the thrower.

- "I hope you're better in baseball than basket-ball," Max gently mocked.

- "You have no idea," Jane smiled.

Max frowned with a smile and got ready to throw the ball. She tried to concentrate all her energy in her arms and threw the ball. Jane hit it with more energy and sent it far in the field. Max followed the ball with wide opened eyes and her jaw dropped while Jane was running base to base. The ball was going back, Max was at the first base,

watching the ball while Jane was running in her direction. Jane slid on the dirt, feet forward. Max felt her hitting her feet and lost her balance. The ball in her hands, she was now laid down on Jane.

- "Get off of me!" Jane grumbled, pushing Max on the floor.

- "Calm down Jane, don't hit my legs next time!" Max replied, amused.

The redhead helped her friend to stand and noticed some colors on her face.

- "You're all red Jane," Max stated, giving a small caress on her cheek.

Jane grabbed Max's wrist and took it off her face with brutality. Max saw her embarrassment and didn't insist on it.

- "Nice shot," Max smiled.

- "Thank you," Jane mumbled, now looking away.

- "Are you okay?" the redhead frowned.

- "Yeah, I'm fine."

The two girls separated, going back to their teams. Jane's team applauded her, even Troy. The girl barely reacted with a quick and small smile and sat back next to Will who greeted her with a big smile. It faded when he saw her fidgeting and jittering a lot and noticed her eyes avoiding contacts with the others. He didn't say anything to not bother her and tried to focus his eyes and mind on the match.

Physical education was over and the teens had to change clothes before going to their last periods. Max managed to be next to Jane, wanting to know her better.

- "You used to play baseball before?" the redhead asked.

- "Kinda, I played one year in a team."

- "Why did you stop?"

- "Life..."

- "Oh...I'm sorry..." Max pouted.

Jane nodded. She still seemed embarrassed, and she was avoiding eyes contact with Max which was intriguing the girl. She wanted to keep talking to her, but Jane was already ready and left the changing room, letting Max frustrated.

## 5. The invitation

Max was tired. It was just the first week, and she was already done with school. Hopefully for her, it was the last day, and she joined her friends at the lunch table. One of the things she liked the most about school was her friends, she could see them everyday, and now, she had Jane too. The girl was still a bit distant and shy, but she had some classes with them, the redhead hoped it would help her to create more bonds with her.

- "Hey Max," Will smiled.
- "Hey, Mike is not here?"
- "He wanted to talk to Jane," Dustin answered.
- "Oh, really?" Beverly smirked.
- "What?" the boy frowned.
- "Nothing," Bev smiled.

Dustin saw on his friends' faces that they didn't understand neither. The appearance of a tray on the table made startle everyone.

- "Oh Mike! How are you?" Bev asked, with the same smile.
- "I'm good," the young boy answered with a bigger smile.
- "Why do you look so satisfied?" Lucas frowned.
- "I've invited Jane for a date, and she said yes!" Mike excitedly told.
- "What!?" Will exclaimed louder than he thought.

His friends and some teens of the cafeteria turned their heads to him with a questioning look. Will blushed of embarrassment and looked down at his tray to disappear.

- "So," Beverly continued, looking at Mike again, "she said yes, what are you gonna do?"

- "Well, I asked her if she wanted to go to the movie theater with me, to watch "The return of the living dead two", and then we will eat, I don't know, Burger King probably."

- "So romantic," Max sarcastically said.

- "What do you know about romantism? I mean, do I have to remind you how it finished between you and Gary?" Mike mocked.

Max lost her smile and killed him with her eyes while the others were laughing. In fact, Gary was her boyfriend one year ago and the boy had to move in another, State but Max was in love with him and ran after him at the airport to tell him. His answer was « thank you » before going in the plane. She had no news of him since this day.

- "At least he was polite," Beverly added in a chuckle, making the others laugh more.

- "I hate you all," Max joked. "And an horror movie is so cliché."

- "It's more a comedy than an horror movie, and she was really excited by this," Mike explained. "Why do you even care?"

- "I don't, I just wanted to change the subject," the redhead smirked.

- "Gary was a cunt anyway, you won when he left," the black-haired boy told.

- "I know, I don't care about him anymore, you can laugh about it."

Mike nodded, giving her a warm and friendly smile, with no mockeries in it. Even if she was okay with it now, when it happened it hurt her more than she showed. Mike didn't insist, he didn't want to bring back some bad memories, he knew how much it could hurt.

The school day was coming to an end. Will was in direction of his last period: sport. It was athletic sport, he was fearing it less than baseball, but it was still sport, but at least, not a team sport. He saw Max a bit further and ran to her.

- "Hey Will," Max smiled.



- "Hey Max," the young boy answered out of breath. "Can you believe that Jane accepted a date with Mike?"

- "Um, yeah, why?" the redhead frowned. "I mean, Mike is stupid, but he is good looking. Don't tell him I've said that."

- "I mean, she doesn't know him, and...I don't know, I think he is not her type."

- "I guess. Why is it bothering you so much? You wanted to invite her too?"

- "What? No! Of course not!"

- "There is no shame in it, I mean, Jane is a pretty girl, I can understand that you want to try too," Max told.

- "I don't, okay? It's just, she is new, and Mike jumped on her like a prey."

- "He just asked her for a movie, it's nothing serious. And maybe it won't work, you could try too like that."

Will rolled his eyes. Max wasn't understanding what he meant. They finally arrived to the changing room, Will and Max taking different ways. The redhead saw some space next to Jane and took the opportunity to talk to her.

- "Hey Jane," Max smiled.

- "Hey," Jane replied without looking at her.

- "How was your first week?"

- "Long."

- "Yeah, it's like that for everyone I guess. You have a date with Mike I heard."

- "It's not a date, we are just going to see a movie and eat something after it," Jane explained, trying to put her tee-shirt on.

- "When?"

- "Tomorrow. I usually don't go out on Saturdays nights, but, my sister wants me to have some friends so I guess she will be okay with that."

- "What's her name?" Max softly asked.

- "Constance. She is, she is all I have, losing her would literally kill me. We spend all our Saturdays nights doing stuff together, like, playing board games, video games or watching movies, playing some music sometimes."

- "You play music?"

- "Yeah, I'm not very good at it, just a bit electric guitar and drums for our neighbors' pleasure," Jane chuckled. "But it's more her thing, she is a better artist than me."

- "Don't undervalue you, you're so rude with yourself."

- "No, I'm not, I'm realistic," Jane said with a bit sadness in her voice.

- "What's your thing?" Max asked.

- "Um, being a victim I guess. I won't develop."

Max nodded. Being a victim? It was probably why she had scars on her body. Max preferred not imagining what happened to her, she seemed uncomfortable with this. Her sister was apparently her only family, she was smiling when she was talking about her. Max regretted having not asked more questions about her sister, Jane would have preferred.

Max joined Will who was patiently waiting for her on the field. She knew he was a bit stressing, especially because of the others' mockeries. They were all so mean with him, especially Troy's group. The teacher decided that today would be a relay 4x100 meters. Will sighed loudly, it was a team sport. He was more desperate when the teacher put him in the same team as Troy, at least there were Jane and Clara, but there was still Troy !

- "Why I'm never with you!?" the young boy grumbled.
- "I don't know, but you're very unlucky," Max pouted.
- "Unlucky!? I'm cursed!"
- "Jane and Clara will defend you."
- "I don't know, I think Jane is friend with Troy."
- "Pardon!?" Max asked in shock.
- "I saw them talking in Computers, they were laughing. I hope she is not like him," Will explained.
- "It's because she doesn't know him well for now. And she likes you, you were talking good with her in baseball."
- "I hope you're right," Will sighed, going near his team.

When he approached them, the two girls smiled to him while Troy sighed willingly loudly to make him uncomfortable, which worked. Will looked down and prayed to disappear.

- "I thought it was two girls and two boys in each teams. I see three girls in mine," Troy loudly said, which made majority of the others laugh.
- "You don't like girls?" Jane seriously asked.
- "What?" Troy frowned.
- "Being a girl is wrong? We have no value?"
- "Um, what?"
- "You use my gender as an insult, I wanna know why."
- "Because, he is, you know," Troy tried to explain.
- "Being a girl is a shame?"
- "I, I've never said that!"

- "In fact, it's what you said. You wouldn't date a girl"? Jane continued with the same sharp but calm tone.
  - "Of course I would! I'm not a fag!"
  - "Oh, a fag, what a nice word. But if you don't like girls, as it's a shame to be a girl, you necessarily prefer boys."
  - "Um, um, um...I, I'm not a-"
  - "A fag, I heard. He is more a man than you."
  - "What?" Troy chuckled. "Have you seen him? What does he have more than me?"
  - "Respect. Tolerance."
  - "But—"
  - "Shut up. It's embarrassing for everyone," Jane sharply cut.
- Troy found nothing to answer. People around were shocked, it was one of the only times that someone managed to shut his mouth. Clara tried to hide her smile behind her hand, but it was too big.
- "Don't let them take you down," Jane told.
  - "Who?" Will frowned.
  - "The bullies, you need to stand up for yourself 'cause no one else will."
  - "I, I know, but I'm too weak."
  - "Not true, you're not confident, it's not the same. You should be proud to be who you are."
  - "It's hard."
  - "I know."
  - "Are you proud of who you are?" Will asked.

- "I'm...I'm working on it," Jane answered, looking down.

Will and Jane joined their team. After some warm-ups, their teacher planned some races. Will was in third position, he felt so much weight on his shoulders and felt stupid for it because it was not a competition. The race had begun, and he saw the stick arriving to him. What he was fearing happened, he lost all the advance his team had, Jane was the last one to begin the last meters. He watched her gaining on the other contestants like a lioness after her prey. He didn't know how much she finished, but by Troy's happiness, he was sure she made an amazing ascent. He walked as best as he could to them, not feeling his legs anymore. Jane was out of breath but gave him anyway a smile and a friendly tap on his arm.

- "Hey Jane," Max intervened, out of breath and with a red and sweating face. "I've finished fourth because of you, what a race!" the redhead said with a joking tone.

- "We could have been first if we hadn't the queer with us!" Troy angrily told.

- "Go to hell Troy! You should stop telling things like that before I make sure you can't talk anymore at all!" Max threatened.

Troy frowned of frustration and went farther. Max put a gently hand on her friend's shoulder to be sure he was ok. Will had a small smile to reassure her, but he wanted more and more to be somewhere else.

The teacher whistled the end of the period, for Will's relief. The changing room was the last hard step for the young boy, he was changing his trousers when he heard Troy saying loudly how a fag and a queer he was. How was he supposed to stand up for himself? No one would take him seriously, it was useless. And Troy and his friends talking like if he wasn't here made him feel more worthless and useless. He didn't change his tee-shirt and left the room, waiting for Max outside. He hid behind a bin and watched the door. He finally saw his friend and felt allowed to get out of his hideout.

- "Hey Will, I was looking for you," Max smiled.

- "I was just...there," the boy answered. "Jane is not here?"

- "No, she hasn't changed her clothes, she apparently has something important to do. You already miss her?" the redhead smirked.

Will shook his head and rolled his eyes. He couldn't stop thinking of Jane and Mike's date the next day, he was feeling betrayed and couldn't stand that feeling. He tried to change his mind and said goodbye to Max before going to his home.

## 6. The exercise

The two redheads were in direction of their basket-ball training. It was the last one before the competition next week. It was a friendly competition, but it was still very exciting. They entered the changing room and saw Jane's stuff at their usual place.

- "Do you think she will be ready for next week?" Max asked.

- "I don't know, maybe she trained during the holidays," Beverly answered.

- "In the snow?"

Beverly pouted and shrugged. The two girls got ready before going to the field. Jane was like the first time they met her, between two benches and listening to music. They sat next to her, one on each side, and Beverly took off her headphone.

- "What is it today?" the redhead asked.

- "Sex Pistols," Jane answered with a smile.

- "Can I?"

Jane nodded. Beverly put the headphone and began to move her head with the rhythm of the song. Max and Jane watched the girl with a frown and an amused smile. Beverly stopped because she was laughing and gave back the headphone to Jane.

- "I know, so much talents is very impressive," the redhead joked.

The girls chuckled. Jane turned off her walkman before putting it in her bag.

- "You're ready for the match next week?" Max asked.

- "I will probably not play."

- "Of course you will! We are only nine, if you don't play everyone will see it!"

- "I know, but it's not up to me, I trained during the holidays, I'm still bad but...less, I guess."

- "It's a friendly match, it's just for fun," Bev reassured.

- "Yeah..."

- "Hey, what's wrong?" Max softly asked.

- "Nothing...It's just, my sister told me she would come, I don't want her to come to watch me...sitting on a bench."

- "Aw Jane, this is so cute," Beverly said, rubbing her shoulder. "Don't worry, if we see that the coach let you on the bench, we will talk to her."

- "Really?"

- "Of course, everybody can have fun!" Max told.

Jane looked at the two girls with child eyes and looked down to hide her smile growing on her face. Max couldn't resist to her cute smile and felt a strange but pleasant sensation inside her stomach. The other girls arrived so the training could begin. Everyone noticed that Jane was a bit better than last time and encouraged the girl by letting her shoot more. After the two hours, Jane changed herself quickly and left the changing room in running.

Will was with his mother at the grocery store. He was working on his Geometry homework while his mother was behind the counter. He heard the bell ringing but didn't look up, wanting to finish his exercise.

- "Jane! I told you, you don't need to run," Joyce softly said, going to her.

- "I...didn't want...to be...late," Jane answered, out of breath, bended forward with her hands on her knees.

- "You are not late, you are fifteen minutes in advance! I don't want you to tire yourself, you already do enough. Take some rest before beginning."



Jane nodded and straightened. She saw Will at the counter, looking at her with a frown. They were apparently both surprised to see each other.

- "This is Will, my son," Joyce said, putting her hand on his back, "and this is—"

- "Jane, I know, we have some classes together," Will cut.

- "Oh good," the mother smiled. "(approached her son's ear) are you in good terms with her?"

- "Yes mom, don't worry."

Joyce nodded and went back to her work while Jane walked to Will and watched above his shoulder to see what he was doing.

- "Oh, it's the exercises of Geometry," the young girl stated.

- "Yeah, you did them?" Will asked.

- "I tried but damn, the five is so hard!"

- "God exactly! I've never hated theater so much!"

- "Totally! Why does she need triangles for a decor!? And this, (shows the book) it's not even a real shape!"

- "I know! What kind of drama is it!?"

Joyce watched the two teenagers debating of their homework and trying to solve it. She was glad to see that Will managed to have a new friend, Jane seemed to be a nice girl, and she saw that Will was comfy next to her.

After fifteen minutes, the two friends finished their exercise without breaking anything. There were not a lot of customers so Joyce let Jane talk a bit with Will. She liked seeing them interacting, it was refreshing.

## 7. The date

Mike tried many outfits. He was hesitating, not knowing if he should be casual, elegant, cool, or normal. Not normal, it was a date not a party with friends. Elegant maybe? He liked his shirt but thought it was too much, he would scare her. Casual? Cool? What about both? He opted for black sneakers with blue jeans, a white tee-shirt with « Back to the futur » on it, and a black suit jacket. He brushed quickly his hair, put perfume, and smiled to the mirror, proud of himself and excited.

He waited in front of the movie theater, watching constantly his watch like if it could accelerate the time. He was hopping when he saw Jane arriving a bit farther. She was wearing black boots, black jeans, a red Sex Pistols tee-shirt, and a black leather jacket, with her hair in a half-bun.

- "Hey Jane, you look beautiful," the boy greeted with a big smile, feeling his heart racing.

- "Thank you, you look great too," Jane smiled. "You are very elegant, I look like a shit bag next to you."

- "No, no, I like shit bags! No! I mean, you, not shit bags, you look great, arhem," Mike clumsily told, scratching the back of his head.

- "Relax, I'm not here to kill you," the young girl joked to calm him.

- "Yeah, yeah, um, I've got something for you."

Mike searched his jacket pockets to find his present for her. He took off a white flower with a small stalk on it.

- "It's a blossom of an orange tree, it means beauty," Mike explained, feeling the sweat flowing from his forehead.

- "Aww Mike, it's so sweet!"

She took the flower and put it in her jacket, inside her chest pocket, letting the flower exceed. She showed it to Mike who was relieved to see she didn't think it was stupid or tacky. He offered her his arm and

took her inside the movie theater.

At the half of the movie, Jane got the giggles. Mike didn't know why she was laughing so much, but he began to chuckle too. Her laugh was the most beautiful one he had heard during his life. Hearing each other made them laugh more and more, annoying the people around. A security guard forced them to leave.

- "I'm sorry," Jane apologised, still laughing.

They were now in front of the building, under the stars.

- "Don't be, it was cool," Mike chuckled.

The two teens took a deep breath and managed to stop laughing.

- "Why did you laugh?" Mike asked.

- "God, have you seen the acting? It was so bad!" Jane explained with a small laugh at the end.

- "Yeah it's true, the first one was better."

Jane nodded and wiped her tears with a smile. Mike thought it was the moment, his eyes were focused on her lips, those beautiful lips which seemed so soft and to taste so good. It was sooner than he planned, but he felt it inside him, it was now or never. He placed his hands on Jane's cheeks and leaned to her. Their lips smashed together. It was tasting mint, probably her toothpaste, with an aftertaste of chocolate. He wanted to stay like that forever, with this feeling of butterflies in his stomach and his knees shaking of happiness. He broke the kiss, more to breath than because he wanted, and looked deeply into her eyes. He smirked, satisfied, and leaned again to kiss her. But this time, she stopped him with her hand on his chest.

- "What?" Mike frowned with a frustated tone.

- "Um, I, I'm sorry..."

- "What? I did something wrong?"

- "No!"

- "Then what!?" Mike continued, feeling the anger growing.

- "It's...complicated..."

- "I'm not good enough for you!? You prefer Will, that's it!?"

- "What? No, it's not that, please calm down," Jane begged, grabbing him by his arms.

- "But I wanna know what I did wrong, I want to undersand!"

- "You did nothing wrong, everything was ok, I am wrong," Jane explained.

- "No you're not Jane, you, you are amazing, I'm a loser," Mike told with disappointment. "You are too good for me, what was I thinking! I'm so stupid..."

- "That's not true, I, I've been stupid, I thought it was just to see a movie because you wanted to be my friend! I-I can't...love you."

Mike frowned and looked at her. She seemed more hurt than him and thought he became angry a bit too fast. She looked around with terrified and wet eyes to see if there were people next to them, but the street was empty. He felt her hands shaking on his arms, and she was biting her bottom lip like if she was worried.

- "I, I would prefer...I would prefer dating Max...or Beverly..."

Mike frowned more, so much more that he thought he would die with this face. He needed a moment to realise what she said. He didn't know what to say, it was the first time he had been in this situation. He felt stupid, stupid for thinking she wanted to be his girlfriend, instead of this, he embarrassed her.

- "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry...I've ruined your night, you probably hate me now...I should go," Jane said with a tear falling on her cheek.

Jane was on her way to leave, but Mike quickly grabbed her arm and looked at her with a light frown. She began to stress, fearing his

reaction.

- "You would really prefer dating Max over me? I mean, Bev, okAY, I understand, she is pretty and funny and smart, but Max, she is so loud! You will finish deaf!" Mike told.

Jane had a confused expression, not knowing if she should smile or not. Mike smirked to let her understand it was a joke. Jane exhaled a laugh and sniffed. Mike wiped her tears and warmly smiled to her.

- "I'm sorry," Jane said looking down.

- "For what?"

- "Breaking your heart."

- "My heart is fine," Mike smiled.

- "Yeah, yours is fine..."

- "Hey, what does that mean?"

- "I shouldn't prefer...girls..."

- "Why? I prefer girls too," Mike joked. "You wanna eat?"

- "Um, yeah, if you still want me to stay."

- "Of course, the date is not over," the young boy smiled.

He wrapped his arm around Jane and began to walk.

- "If I cut my dick, does it work?"

- "No," Jane chuckled.

- "Well, I tried!"

The two friends ate cheeseburgers at McDonalds, because Jane was not really fan of Burger King. They had walked in the night, watching the stars before Mike decided to bring back Jane to her home. The young girl was living in an apartment, at the third floor.

- "Even if it didn't finish like I thought, I spent an amazing night," Mike said.

- "Yeah, me too," Jane smiled. "I'm sorry."

- "Stop apologising, it's fine, I'm fine, and most importantly, you are fine. We are friends."

- "Really?"

- "Of course, well, if you want."

- "I would love to," Jane answered. "But, if, you know, it could stay between us..."

- "I'm a grave, don't worry about it," he reassured.

Jane nodded. Mike was glad to see her smiling. He took her in his arms and tightened the hug. He felt her arms wrapping him and heard her sniffing.

- "Are you okay?" Mike whispered in her ear.

- "I feel nothing," Jane told with a cracking voice.

- "Not even friendship?"

- "Um, yeah, probably."

- "Then you feel something, it's the only thing that matter."

He broke the hug and kissed her cheek.

- "I'll go, I see you on Monday," Mike said.

- "Yes, be careful on the road."

Mike took the stairs while Jane entered her apartment. When she closed the door, she let her body take support on it and slid on the floor, her knees at the level of her chest. She let some tears falling and heard some noise in the living room at her left.

- "It was a date?" a tall girl with short messy blond hair and looking

like a thin man asked.

- "Yes," Jane answered with more tears. "I still don't like boys."

- "I know."

- "I thought I could love both but...I don't...He was so nice, and charming, and funny, it was an amazing night, why can't I love boys?" Jane cried.

- "It's okay, you're gonna be okay," her sister calmly said.

The tall woman approached slowly her little sister and sat next to her, holding out a tissue. Jane took it and plunged her face in Constance's shoulder.

- "You wanna do something?" her sister asked.

- "I don't know...Movie?"

- "Sure."

Constance took her in her arms and brought her to the couch. They put a movie and both of them fell asleep in front of it.

## 8. The black eye

The party waited the lunch time to question Mike about his date with Jane. In class, it was impossible, and during the break Dustin had a work to do because he arrived late in class. Beverly joined them in running at the table, half throwing her tray on it.

- "So!? How was it? Did you kiss? Are you a couple now?" the redhead asked with excitement.

- "Bev, we are eating!" Max grumbled.

- "And?"

- "I don't wanna know what Jane and Mike did while I'm eating!"

- "And Will is not here yet," Lucas stated.

- "Oh yeah it's true, what is he doing, I wanna know!" Beverly said.

- "Don't get excited too much, you could be disappointed," Mike intervened.

- "What!? Why!?"

- "Well, you will probably have your answers 'cause Will is arriving, and he is not alone," Lucas smirked.

Will was showing Jane the cafeteria. It was the first time the young girl had put a step in it, and she was really stressed by it. She kept looking around and playing with her fingers.

- "Hey, are you okay?" Will softly asked.

- "Yeah, yeah, I'm okay," Jane weakly smiled.

Will nodded and gave her a tray. He showed her the way to follow and gave her some tips, like, if she saw the same plate with the same apple pie during all weeks, she should avoid it. The two friends approached the table, Jane behind Will with an anxious face.



- "I told Jane she could eat with us," Will said.
- "If that's okay," Jane shyly added.
- "Of course it is! Come take a seat!" Mike greeted, tapping the chair next to him.

Jane had a relieved smile and sat next to Mike, in front of Will who was next to Beverly. Dustin was next to Mike, in front of Max and Lucas.

- "So, now that everyone is here, we can know how was your date," Beverly sneakily smiled.

- "Oh, the date? Why do you wanna know that?" Jane asked with a shaking voice and worried eyes.

- "Two of my friends went on a date, and you wonder why I wanna know what happened?" the redhead rhetorically said.

- "We...we are just friends..."

- "Oh...What happened?" Lucas asked.

- "She is not ready for a relationship for now. That's all," Mike quickly intervened seeing his friend's embarrassment.

- "Okay...How was the date?" Beverly insisted.

- "You don't see they don't wanna talk about it!?" Max growled.

- "But I wanna know how Mike is on a date, he never told us," the redhead continued with a begging tone.

Max pouted to her and looked at Jane, accompanied by the others of the group. Jane watched them one by one with a frown, finishing on Mike who seemed to allow her to tell them.

- "Um, well...he was, stressed but...confident and...romantic."

- "Romantic!? Mike!?" Max frowned.

- "You didn't eat at Burger King?" Dustin asked.

- "McDonalds, I don't really like Burger King," Jane explained.
- "See! I'm not the only one," Beverly intervened.
- "You have weird tastes," Lucas stated.
- "But Jane doesn't like it too!"
- "Then, she has weird tastes too!"
- "You are rude."
- "No, I have weird tastes," Jane told, avoiding their eyes.

Mike lightly rolled his eyes. He knew what she was meaning and didn't want her to feel bad for being herself. He gently nudged her and gave her a look meaning « nothing is wrong with you » to reassure her. Will, who was in front of them, noticed this exchange of looks and wondered if he wasn't right about her since the beginning.

The bell rang the end of the lunch time. Will, Max, and Jane were walking to their next period, physical education. Will was still terrified by baseball, but this week-end he tried to work on his swing and wondered if he was better. Max and Jane left Will to go to the girls' changing room.

- "So, Mike is romantic?" Max smirked.
- "Is it so surprising?"
- "I don't know, I mean, "The return of the dead two" and McDonalds, it doesn't sound like a romantic date."
- "You know, you don't need big roses and candles to be romantic. He is romantic, by the way he acts not where we go. I mean, he offered me a flower which meant beauty, when the security guard asked us to leave because I was laughing too much, he didn't blame me, when I rejected his second kiss, he...okay, at first he was mad, but when I explained him why, he...he still wanted to be my friend, he didn't think something was wrong with me...he wanted to finish the date even if it was dead," Jane explained with emotions in her voice.

Max saw on her friend's face a mix between sadness and worry, but she didn't know why. Maybe her last boyfriend left her brutally, and it hurt her a lot.

- "You are the first person who talks about Mike like that," Max softly said.

- "Really?" Jane asked.

- "Yeah, I mean, he isn't romantic with us, which is normal I guess, but he never explained us how were his dates."

- "Maybe he is scared about what you could think about him."

- "You think?"

- "I wouldn't be surprised. Do you like him?"

- "Mike? He is my friend, why?" Max frowned.

- "I don't know, you mock him a lot."

- "This is how we work, I mean, he mocks me a lot too, but we are like...brother and sister, I guess. You thought I was hating him?"

- "I was wondering, I don't know all of you very well, I saw some of you with me in class, but that's all, and of course you and Bev in basket-ball. I don't know how you work."

- "Well, I don't think we are really more different than other groups of friends, we like to mock each other, but if one of us has a problem, he or she can count on us," Max explained. "I mean, your friends weren't like that with you?"

Max didn't hear her answering and turned her head to watch her. The other girl seemed to be in a flashback, she wasn't moving and she was staring into space. It was apparently not a good flashback, she was clenching her jaw and closing her fists. Max placed a gently hand on her shoulder which made her startle.

- "No. They were just mocking me," Jane said with a serious tone.

Jane left the changing room without looking at Max. The redhead stayed dazed, apparently not only her ex-boyfriend didn't treat her in a good way.

It was Will's turn to be at the first base. He was stressed but felt relieved when he saw Jane at the thrower place. The young girl gave him a warm and encouraging smile. He placed his feet like she explained the week before and the rest of his body followed. She nodded and raised her thumb to tell him it was good. He felt reassured, even if she was in the other team, she was the only one on his side. She threw the ball, but Will missed it. He realised a bit more that sport was definitely not his thing. She threw a second ball, but, this time, he touched it. He was going to run, but the ball hit Jane's face.

- "Oh my god, Jane! Are you okay?" Will asked, running to her.

- "Yeah. I'm fine," the girl chuckled. "I'll have a black eye, that's all."

Jane was keeping her eye closed and a tear was falling of it. Will felt bad, he hurt the only nice person with him.

- "I'm so sorry," the young boy apologised, feeling his cheeks blushing.

- "It's okay, don't worry, really."

The teacher told Jane to leave the field to put ice on her eye. Will had one more hit and was stressing more and more when he saw Troy becoming the new thrower. The other boy looked at him with a patronizing look to make him feel weak, which worked. Will felt his legs shaking and his hands becoming moist. The others were laughing at him, he was sure. Troy threw the ball so fast that he didn't see it. He dropped the bat and quickly walk to the bench, ignoring Troy's mockeries.

Jane sat next to Max who had prepared a bag of ice. She put it on her friend's eye.

- "Does it hurt?" the redhead asked.

- "Not that much," Jane mumbled.

- "I'm sorry..."

- "It wasn't you."

- "No, I meant for bringing back some bad memories about...your « friends ». I'm too curious."

- "It's okay, it's just, I'm done having friends."

- "But, we are friends, right?" Max frowned, a bit upset.

- "Only because you don't know me, otherwise, you would hate me."

- "I'm sure not."

Jane lightly shook her head and took the bag in her hand, forcing Max to let it go. She wasn't understanding why Jane was keeping a distance with them, when you were new, the first thing you want was friends, right? But not Jane, or maybe she didn't want to feel too close to them, worried to be hurt like with her old friends.

On the other side, Will was feeling like a piece of shit. In one throw Troy managed to break the small confidence he had. After the class, Will didn't wait anyone. He left the changing room quickly and went directly to his next period, avoiding the two girls.

## 9. The work

- "You're okay Will? I hadn't seen you after sport yesterday," Max said.

- "Yeah, I'm fine," the young boy answered with an irritated tone.

The two friends were in front of Will's locker. Max didn't stop wondering if Will was okay since the day before, he usually waited for her.

- "Okay, it's just, I thought something happened to you, that's all."

- "No, nothing happened to me," Will continued with a bit anger in his voice.

- "Did I do something? You seem upset."

- "No, I'm fine! I just, I don't need you to mother me! I need to defend me myself, you won't be always there for me, or Mike, or Beverly, or Lucas, or Dustin! You will all be in different colleges and I need to defend me myself! I have to stand up for myself because no one else will!" Will angrily said.

He slammed his locker and left before Max could answer. He felt the tears coming and didn't want her to see it because he knew she would think he was a fragile little creature and was done with people thinking that of him. He thought he couldn't feel worse, but he saw Jane and Mike talking together. Even if they told they were just friends, Will didn't know what to think about it, it was hurting him more than it should, he was wrong since the beginning and felt stupid for it. He went straight in his classroom without saluting his friends.

He was in Geometry, and Jane was at the table next to him, with a shiner at her left eye. She tried to talk to him before the beginning of the class, but she rapidly gave up when she barely had answers. He was feeling guilty for treating her like that because he wasn't really mad at her but he didn't want to talk to her. He wanted to make a joke when the teacher began to correct the exercise five, the one with

the improbable shapes, but he was feeling too ridiculous now, she wouldn't understand why he was talking to her after being icy with her.

The bell rang the end of the class, and the teens put their stuff in their bags. Will thought he could try something with Jane.

- "Hey," Will shyly said.

- "It's okay, I understand, you don't have to justify yourself, you're not the first one who doesn't want to be friend with me," Jane answered without looking at him.

- "No Jane, I'm sorry—"

- "It's fine, I'm used to it. Have a good day."

Jane put her khaki bag on her shoulder and left the room with a quick walking. Will hated himself right now. He didn't know why he was so mad today. On his way to his locker, he saw Max at hers looking at him but not coming to him.

- "Hey," Will shyly said.

- "Hey," Max answered taking her books in her locker.

- "I, I'm sorry for...yelling at you..."

Max closed her locker and took support on it, looking at Will. She wasn't rancorous, but she liked to know what she did wrong to not do it again.

- "Yesterday, during the match," Will began, looking at his feet, "after I hit Jane, Troy became the new thrower and...I lost my confidence...I looked at you, but you were taking care of Jane, and I remembered what Jane told me the week before, to stand up for myself because no one else will. I realised how true it was, and it's turning in my head, and it's scaring me a lot," the young boy finished with tears in his eyes.

Max's vexation disappeared when she noticed her friend's sadness. Will had always been the favorite victim of the bullies, but they were

more quiet when he was around the party. She understood his fear and hoped she could help him to face them.

- "And I think I've hurt Jane..."

- "What!?" Max frowned.

- "I...I was so angry this morning and, I don't know, I saw her with Mike, and it got me angrier so...I ignored her in Geometry..."

- "Damn Will! If you have a crush on her, just ask her out!"

- "I don't have a crush on her! It's...something else..."

- "What is it?" Max gently asked.

- "Nothing. I don't wanna talk about it," Will answered looking away.

- "You know you can talk to me, right?"

- "Yeah, yeah, I know, I just...don't want to."

- "Ok. Do you come on Saturday at the match?"

- "Oh, yeah, I think Mike, Lucas, and Dustin are coming too," Will said, relieved to see his friend not mad at him.

- "Really? Cool," Max smiled.

Max accompanied Will to his locker. The redhead explained to the young boy the new recipe she learned for the cooking class, she tried it this week-end and was proud of the result.

Will spent the morning trying to talk to Jane, but the girl was avoiding him. He sat with his friends at the lunch table, hoping for her to join them.

- "Jane doesn't eat with us?" Beverly asked.

- "Apparently not, she is over there," Lucas answered showing a table with his chin.

The party all looked at where he was showing. Jane was eating alone,



hearing some music and reading something.

- "We could tell her to come, no?" Dustin frowned. "Well, if you all want, I like her, but I don't know for you."

- "Yeah, she is cool, she is good in mechanics," Lucas told.

- "Mechanics? This girl is full of surprise," Beverly stated.

- "She is the only girl?" Mike asked.

- "Yep, and she is better than many of us."

- "Did you talk to her?" Max asked.

- "Kinda, but she was at the opposite of me, I think she is the kind of person who likes to be alone."

- "Or to be scared of people."

- "We should ask her to come, it could reassure her," Beverly continued.

- "Yeah, Will, I think you should go to her," Max said.

Will looked at her with worried eyes. He stood, but when he watched Jane, he saw something which discouraged him. A tall, strong man with a jacket of the high school sat in front of her.

- "Shit, Troy, what does he want from her!?" Dustin grumbled.

- "I hope he won't bother her, otherwise..."

- "Otherwise what Mike? You will stutter at him like the last time?" Max intervened.

- "Do-don't sa-say that Tr-Troy, it's no-not ni-nice," Lucas mocked, imitating him.

- "Ha ha ha, I'm dying of laughing," Mike sarcastically told before rolling his eyes.

His friends laughed, Max pushing gently him. They looked at Jane

and Troy interacting and were surprised to see them talking normally and having fun.

- "Is he hitting on her?" Lucas pouted.
- "She won't fall for him," Mike affirmed.
- "Why not?"
- "Because I'm better than Troy, he has no chance."
- "I wouldn't be that sure," Max told.
- "Believe me, he has no chance."
- "I wonder what they are talking about," Beverly mumbled.

The entire table turned to look at them. Troy's back was directed to them which simplified their watch, even if Jane could see them at any moment.

The two teens were working on an oral presentation for their English class. Troy was showing her some documents he found but noticed the girl was not listening.

- "Okay, what's the problem?" Troy asked.
- "What? Oh, no, nothing, sorry, continue," Jane answered.
- "No, I won't. Not before I know what's bothering you."
- "It's nothing really, you'll find it stupid anyway."
- "Try, you could be surprised," the young boy smiled.

Jane hesitated. She watched his group of friends, all wearing the school's jacket. They were all in the football team, being the coolest people of the school, the ones nobody bothered. But she thought that Troy was a bit different when he wasn't with them. Maybe she was wrong, she already trusted the wrong persons before and was worried to do the same mistake with him.

- "It's just, I thought, someone was my friend but, he was cold this

morning and...I don't know what I did wrong..." Jane confessed.

- "Really? Who is this guy?"

- "I won't tell you."

- "Why?" Troy frowned.

- "Because you're gonna mock him and probably me."

- "I promise I won't."

- "I'm not sure."

- "Please, you won't focus on the work anyway."

- "Okay," Jane sighed. "It's Will."

- "Will!? The queer!? You wanna be friend with the fag!?" Troy told a bit too loud.

- "God, what's wrong with you!? You don't even know if he is gay or not!

- "Oh please, it's literally written on his face!"

- "And then what? Why does it matter so much? You're scared he will hurt your masculinity!?" Jane asked, feeling the anger growing.

- "No! I mean, if he doesn't touch me..."

- "Why would he touch you!? You bully him and his friends! You really think gays touch every attractive persons!?"

- "Oh, you think I'm attractive?" Troy smirked.

Jane sighed sharply and rolled her eyes. She gave up, it was like talking to a wall. Troy's smile faded when he saw Jane pissed off in front of him.

- "I'm sorry, I was joking," Troy told.

- "When were you joking?" Jane angrily asked.

- "For the attractive thing," the young boy frowned.
- "Yeah, that's what I thought."
- "What?"
- "Nothing. Just go back to work and finish with it."

Troy nodded and resumed his explanations about his documents. The party witnessed the scene without knowing what they said.

- "See? She is mad at him," Mike stated.
- "Maybe it was a couple argue!" Max mocked.

The girl chuckled when she saw their disgusted faces. Mike hoped they weren't a couple, because that would mean Jane invented all this story just to find an excuse to not be his girlfriend. Maybe she tried to have his sympathy and manipulated him, but for what? He wondered if it was really true what she said to him because she seemed to be fine with Troy after all.

## 10. True friends

Will didn't find the courage to face Jane during the week. The girl wasn't making things easier by avoiding him and the others. Even Mike seemed to have taken his distance with her. The black-haired boy was convinced now that she lied to him just to not be his girlfriend. Ignoring her was really hard, he didn't understand why she seemed to care about him. He preferred to make things clear and took her apart, behind the high school.

- "What's wrong Mike?" Jane asked with a worried tone.
- "Did you lie?" Mike angrily told.
- "Lie? About what?"
- "About your sexuality!"
- "Ssssh! (places her hand on his mouth) What the hell!? I told you to not talk about it!"
- "(takes off her hand) You seem to really appreciate Troy," the boy stated with the same anger. "You know, if you didn't like me you could have just told me instead of inventing a stupid story like that!"
- "That's what you think? Really? I don't appreciate Troy, we have a work to do in English. He is racist, sexist, homophobic, a bully, and arrogant. And no, it wasn't a fucking lie!" Jane explained.
- "I hope it's not!"
- "No it's not! What are you waiting from me!? To have sex with another girl right in front of you!?"

Mike opened his mouth to reply but stopped. He was imagining the scene and thought he wasn't totally against this idea.

- "Wake up!" Jane interrupted, snapping her fingers. "I'm not here for your fantasies!"
- "Yeah, sorry," Mike pouted.

- "You could have asked me without being angry, I would have answered you anyway."

- "I know, it's just, Monday, we saw you with Troy during the lunch time, and we began to have hypothesis, and I thought maybe, you wanted me to feel sorry for you to leave you alone."

- "Oh Mike," Jane sighed, "you really have no idea what people like me live everyday."

- "No, not really...I'm sorry..."

Jane had a weak smile to reassure him, but she was scared someone heard their conversation. Mike rubbed his thumb on her cheek to wipe a tear she didn't feel falling.

Will was looking for Jane. He saw her going outside with Mike, but he lost her track. He finally found them near the dumpsters of the cafeteria. Mike was caressing her cheek with heart in his eyes while Jane was smiling to him. Will was sure they were secretly dating. He felt anger growing and tried to convince him it was not bad if they were in love, people didn't have to be the way he wanted them to be. Jane wasn't like him, he had to deal with it and to apologise. But not now, he didn't want to witness a « make out » scene and preferred going back inside the school to see his friends.

- "You found her?" Max asked.

- "Yeah, but she was with Mike," Will answered with bitterness.

- "Oh, okay. They spend lots of time together."

- "Indeed."

- "You won't ask her out?"

- "No! I don't want to!" Will got worked up. "Can you stop with that!?"

- "Okay, okay, sorry," Max pouted.

Max saw that Will was hurt by their relationship, but both of them told they were just friends, so he still had a chance to invite her for a

date. But he was too shy, and Jane told them she didn't want to be in a relationship right now, so maybe asking her out now was not a good idea.

The last period was beginning, and it was physical education for Max, Will, and Jane. The two girls met in the changing room, as usual.

- "Can I ask you something?" Max asked.

- "Go ahead," Jane answered.

- "Why didn't you eat with us this week? Is it because of Will?"

- "Um, yeah, I mean, if he doesn't wanna be my friend, I can't force him, and I don't want to...intrude your group. I've been here just for one week."

- "One month you mean."

- "Yeah, technically for one month, but at school since last week," Jane explained.

- "He likes you, he wanted to apologise but, you know, he is very shy."

- "Oh...I can relate to that."

- "Good. He is a nice boy and was probably worried to see you being close to Troy."

- "Mike had the same fear."

- "I'm not surprised, he have bullied them for years now. Especially Will."

- "Yeah...I saw that," Jane said with a small voice.

Max heard some sadness in her voice. Seeing someone you like being bullied was always hard. Maybe she had a crush on him too? They would be a cute couple. But, for now, she wanted to see her smile, she thought she had a cute one.

- "Your eye looks better, still awful but less," Max joked.

- "Oh, thanks, I guess," Jane chuckled.

Mission accomplished. Jane didn't seem to be the happiest person ever, but Max liked to make people smile, and when Jane was smiling, she was feeling a pleasant heat travelling her body.

The two girls joined the rest of the teens on the field. Today, it was 110 meters hurdles. Max noticed that Jane made the first step to Will, the two friends were now laughing like if nothing ever happened.

The teacher made them do some races. Will didn't like it, he finished last one and heard Troy and his friends laughing at him. Troy was sadly good in sport and won his race against Jane.

- "Nice race," Troy told.

- "Thanks," Jane answered out of breath.

- "I saw you and the queer talking. He is still your friend, you're happy?"

- "Um, yeah, I am."

- "Cool, I'm happy for you," the young boy smiled.

- "I can't tell if you like me or not," Jane frowned.

- "I do."

- "Then, can you do me a favor? Can you stop bullying him and his friends?"

- "I'm not bullying them."

- "Yes, you are."

- "It's just jokes," Troy explained like if it was nothing.

- "Do they laugh?" Jane seriously asked.

Jane saw confusion on his face. He was so concentrated to make his



friends laugh that he didn't care about his victims. She didn't know if he was mean or just stupid.

- "You think you can?" Jane asked again.

- "Your kindness will destroy you, Jane," Troy bitterly chuckled.

- "And your wickedness will make you finish alone."

- "I have friends."

- "Are they true friends? Or they just laugh at your jokes because you're the coolest guy of the high school. You are the captain of the football team, and you are actually pretty good, you are handsome, you have a cute smile, but you are an asshole, and one day, they will be done with that and leave you forever with the only regret of having followed you all these years. Maybe my friends aren't cheerleaders or sportmen, but they are loyal."

- "They are true friends," Troy stated with hesitation in his voice.

- "I hope for you, just, be careful with your attitude."

Jane gave him a peace sign and joined Max and Will. She didn't know if they were loyal friends or if she was actually friends with them, but she liked thinking that, they seemed to like her so why not.

## 11. The match

It was almost the end of the fourth period, and Beverly's team was losing of ten points. The boys were in the bleachers, encouraging their friends on the field the best they could. Jane was still on the bench, next to her coach. She hadn't played since the beginning of the match and had no hope of having her chance. She turned to her sister who was at the top of the bleachers and pouted to her. Max and Beverly, who were on the field, noticed their exchange of looks. The coach asked for a timeout, giving the girls the opportunity to help Jane.

- "Coach, we need Jane on the field!" Beverly began.

- "No, we are losing enough," the coach answered.

The two redheads watched Jane's face faded. They didn't understand why the coach was so rude with her, it was a friendly match, and Jane was the only one who hadn't played yet.

- "Maybe we will win thanks to her, if you don't give her a chance, we won't know," Max insisted.

- "But she can't play!"

- "I'm sorry but that's not true," Jenifer intervened. "She made lots of progress!"

- "And plus, she is like our mascot and lucky charm," Clara added.

- "Okay girls! Jane, you play."

- "Uh, really?" the girl asked, surprised.

- "Yes, really! Go on the field before I change my mind!"

Jane quickly stood. She turned to her sister and made a thumb up to her before running to the field. She was stressing a bit, she didn't want to disappoint the coach and the team, she was new and didn't want to have a bad reputation again.

Constance was in the bleachers, watching her sister smiling because she was playing. She didn't know how she managed to not laugh out loud everytime Jane was missing a ball or a pass from her friends. At least, her team wasn't blaming her, they were even laughing with her and encouraging her.

- "This girl sucks! She shouldn't be on the field," a man next to her grumbled.

Constance heard what he said but tried to ignore him. She hoped he had no daughters playing, she probably didn't have a funny life with him.

- "GO TO HELL, DYKE!" the man yelled.

- "Hey!" the blonde girl intervened. "Can you stop, it's just a match!"

- "When you play a match it's to win not to lose!"

The woman between them seemed embarrassed by the situation and clearly wanted to leave them alone.

- "They are having fun, it's all that matters!" Constance continued.

- "Let me guess, she is your daughter?" the man asked with a provoking tone.

- "Sister, and I'm really proud of her and happy to see her smile and have fun," the girl firmly said.

- "We understand, he is just a sportman," the woman between them intervened with a small voice.

Constance nodded and didn't insist. She preferred watching her sister enjoying her moment on the field.

The match finished. Jane had been so stressed that she was unable to aim at the basket correctly and was hating her for this. Thankfully, her team didn't care and all jumped on her shoulders to congratulate her for her first match.

- "How was it?" Beverly, who was on her back with a big smile,

asked.

- "Really fun!" Jane answered.

Beverly rubbed her hair and rode Jane's back to the bench, the fist forward. Max went to the boys who were applauding her for her performance.

- "You weren't lying when you said Jane was bad," Lucas chuckled.

- "She was stressing, she was better at the last training," Max told.

Beverly arrived in running to them and jumped on Max' shoulders of excitement.

- "You are a good loser," Dustin smiled.

- "Yeah! It was cool, and Jane had fun, it's the most important," Beverly stated.

- "Talking about Jane, where is she?" Mike asked.

- "You already can't leave without her," Max joked.

Mike winced at her while the boys gave him a tap on his shoulder, except Will who was still wondering if they were secretly dating or not.

- "She is with her sister," Beverly said, showing the other side of the bleachers.

They saw Jane talking with enthusiasm to a tall blond woman with a hiphop dancer style laughing at what her little sister was telling her. The group decided to approach a bit them to meet her sister, but Max's mother and step-father stopped their progression.

- "Why do you smile!? You lost!" Neil replicated, Max's step-father. "And your entire team lost because of you!"

- "Mind your own ass, dick head! You have nothing better to do than bullying a teenage girl!? Constance, who crossed her arms and placed herself between Jane and the man, replied.

- "I protect my family from Nature's mistakes like you," he answered, pushing her with his finger pointed to her.

Max witnessed the scene without knowing what to do. Even if Neil had never been physically violent toward her, she knew how he was with the others. She gave a tap on her mother's arm and begged her to do something before he begins a fight again. Even if she thought he had no chance against Jane's sister, she seemed stronger and smarter than him, and Max would loved seeing her kicking his ass like he deserved.

- "Neil, it's okay, we don't need to get into a fight. Let's go home," Susan softly intervened.

- "Yeah, I don't want to be violent in front of Maxine."

- "Like if you usually cared," the redhead mumbled.

- "What was that?" Neil slowly asked, looking at Max with angry eyes.

- "Nothing," Max quickly answered.

The step-father stared at his step-daughter with an heavy breathing and his face becoming more and more red. Max was uncomfortable, she knew he wasn't going to answer, not yet, but when she would come back her home, he would spill all his anger on her face until she would feel like a piece of shit. She wanted to tell him a lot of things like to not call her Maxine, but she had done that for years, so she gave up. Neil turned his head to spit on Constance and walked away, followed by his wife, while Jane was holding her sister to not let her hit him. Max grabbed her mother's arm before she could go farther.

- "What were you two doing here!?" Max angrily asked with a low voice to not be heard by the others.

- "We wanted to encourage you," the mother said.

- "Encourage me!? You don't like basket-ball, and you don't like the fact that I'm playing basket-ball, and Neil can't stay calm!"

- "You are still our daughter."

- "No! He is not my father!"

- "Give him a chance," Susan begged.

- "A chance!? He yelled at my friend and spat on her sister, he can go fuck himself!"

Her mother put her hand on her mouth with an outraged look. Max knew she would shock her, but she and Neil seemed to not care about her feelings, so why should she worry about theirs? Her mother left the gymnasium with the bit of dignity she had.

- "I'm sorry about him," Max apologised, embarrassed. "He is an asshole."

- "Yeah, I won't say the contrary!" Constance answered, wiping his saliva on her face.

- "He is always like that?" Jane asked with a concerned tone.

- "No, today he is in a good day, he can be worse!"

- "Does he hit you?"

- "No! No, it's okay, just some yells sometimes, that's all, don't worry. Next year I'll be at college, and I won't see him again," Max reassured.

Jane nodded but wasn't convinced, she noticed her shaking hands she was trying to hide under her arms. She had a complicated step-father too and knew this situation more than they thought.

- "What kind of college?" Constance asked.

- "One where I can become a professionnal cook," Max answered with a smile.

- "Cool, you could teach Jane how to cook pastas without creating a fire."

- "It happened one time!" Jane replied.

- "You created a fire with water! This is the most impossible thing in

the world, and you did it! It's ingenious!"

- "Yeah, kinda," the young girl chuckled. "Oh, I didn't even presented each other! Max, this my sister, Constance, and Constance, this is my friend, Max. And behind her, this is Beverly, Mike, Will, Lucas, and Dustin."

The group shyly waved to the blonde woman. They were a bit impressed, not everyone was able to keep their chin up in front of Neil.

- "I'm sorry, but I have to go," Jane said. "Joyce is already waiting for me."

- "I'll drive you there, it's on my road," her sister answered.

- "Okay," the young girl nodded. "Bye everyone!"

- "Bye Jane!" the party answered at the same time.

They watched them going away while the gymnasium was getting empty, letting the group of friends alone on the bleachers.

- "They are cool," Dustin stated.

- "Yeah, totally," Lucas agreed.

- "I hope Neil won't bother them for this," Max said.

- "Do you believe what you say?" Mike rhetorically asked.

- "Technically," Beverly intervened, "Jane didn't do anything, I don't think he will try to hit her or something, but her sister...I think he will provoke her."

- "She can kick his ass," Will said.

The party looked at Will with an amused frown. They were not used to hear something like that from Will, who was usually shy and polite, and were always surprised when this kind of vocabulary was coming from his mouth.

## 12. Bus travel

As usual for the senior years, the school organised a travel with all the students for three days to visit many places like churches and museum. The party entered the bus with their backpacks and noticed Jane already sitting, with no one next to her.

- "Hey Jane! Can I?" Max asked.

- "Oh, yeah, of course," the other girl smiled, taking off her bag from the seat.

There were no seats in front of them, because of the door. Will was sitting alone in the row next to them, Mike and Lucas in front of him, and Dustin and Beverly in front of them. Max was feeling bad for letting Will alone, but she was hoping for Clara or an other girl to sit with him. At least he could talk with them. But Max wanted to be closer to Jane too, she didn't know why, but she had this weird feeling inside her body which was not unpleasant.

A group of loud teens entered the bus for the party's biggest pleasure. It was the football team and the cheerleaders. They sat in the back of the bus, right behind them. Will was relieved because none of them sat next to him.

The bus was almost full and ready to go when the last student entered the bus, out of breath.

- "Hey Troy!" the back of the bus yelled.

- "We kept you a place next to your best friend," one of them mocked.

The young boy approached and noticed that the only seat free was next to Will, who was now pale of fear and embarrassment. Troy's friends were laughing while Will's friends were looking at each other, trying to help.

- "Exchange with me Will," Jane intervened, taking her stuff. "I'll sit next to Troy."

The young boy didn't say anything and obeyed, whispering a « thank



you » when they exchanged. Troy was next to the window while Jane was on the corridor side. She spent the first half of the travel talking with the party which irritated Troy.

- "I'm punished now!?" the young boy asked.

Jane finished her conversation with Max and Will before slowly turning to him.

- "What are you talking about?" the young girl frowned.

- "You ignore me, I'm bored."

- "Why don't you talk to your friends?"

- "You're my friend."

- "Really?"

- "Um...yeah, I mean, we are not friends?" Troy told with doubt.

- "Well, you are a bully, I don't want to be friend with someone who humiliates and hurts people for fun," Jane sharply replied.

- "I, I, I don't do it for fun..."

- "But you admit you're a bully?"

- "No! I mean...maybe I am, I don't know..."

- "You are not even conscious of what you are doing, it's really sad," Jane stated. "I wish someone will humiliate and hurt you like you do. Maybe you will understand it's not just jokes and not fun to make someone feels bad for who they are, who they love, or what they love."

- "I'm sorry..."

- "No, don't say that if you don't mean it."

Troy remained silent. He crossed his arms and looked outside, upset. He didn't like to feel excluded, he was usually surrounded by people, but now he was alone, he was hoping Jane to be more talkative with

him, but she preferred talking with the losers.

- "I've always been nice with you."

- "You remember my first day at school? And the nice movement you made with your body?" Jane replied.

- "It was a compliment! Because you're pretty," Troy said like if it was obvious.

- "Next time you come to me, and you tell me that I'm pretty instead of faking a sexual moment. I would have thought you were a nice guy instead of wondering if you are mean or just completely not caring!" the young girl got worked up.

- "I'm not mean!"

- "Yes you are, but you're just too blind to see it! You, you should really be careful because one day you will go too far, it will be fatal, and you won't be able to look at you in the mirror anymore," Jane said with a shaking voice at the end.

Troy noticed her emotions when she talked. Now she was looking at her lap and kneading her jeans with embarrassment.

- "Did you do this to someone?" Troy gently asked.

- "Did what?" Jane answered with a bit irritation.

- "Um...going too far with someone."

- "No. I'm not like that."

- "Then it means—"

- "It means nothing Troy! I can defend people from bullying with the only reason to not want them to be hurt!" Jane got angry now looking at him. "Bullying is weak and coward."

- "I'm not weak and coward!"

- "Then why do you bully my friends if it's not to feel stronger!?"

- "I, I don't know...because it's fun!"

- "Fun!? You don't prefer having fun WITH someone instead of having fun OF someone!?"

- "I'm not the worse."

- "Yeah, but you're not the best too! You could...show the example and defend them when one of your « friends » is acting like an asshole."

- "No!"

- "Why!?"

- "Because they would bully me after!"

Jane got what she was looking for. She knew he was acting like that because he was scared of them and scared to be expelled of the football team and to finish alone.

- "You prefer having lots of fake friends than a bit true friends?" Jane said with a calmer tone.

- "I...I thought they were true friends..." Troy confessed, uncomfortable.

- "If you have to act like they want, it's not friends."

- "Yeah you are probably right," the young boy sighed. "They didn't let a seat next to Will to bother him, but to bother me."

- "Would it bother you to spend the ride with him?"

- "I don't know. (approaches to Jane) Is he gay or not?" Troy whispered.

- "Does it matter?"

Troy didn't answer. He was a bit lost of what he was thinking or not, he just realised he hadn't real friends.

Jane noticed his serious frown and was really hoping him to think by

himself, something he probably didn't do before just to be accepted. And, for the first time, he hadn't called Will a queer or a fag or whatever he used to call him, but by his name.

- "Everybody hates gays," Troy said, looking nowhere.
- "That's, that's not true," Jane answered feeling hurt by his words.
- "Who?"
- "Me, my sister, Mike, and probably more."
- "Mhm, okay," Troy pouted.
- "That's all?" Jane frowned.
- "Yeah, what do you want me to say?"
- "I don't know, I can't tell what you think, it's getting me mad."
- "I think nothing, I don't know him."
- "Why are you not like that everytime?"
- "You know why."
- "I prefer when you are like you than like them," Jane stated.
- "Yeah, me too, but you're not in the football team, I need to stay in, I have no futur instead!" Troy explained.
- "You really think you will be expelled if you're not a cunt?"
- "I don't know! But if I'm not like them, they will treat me like shit!"
- "So you do to others what you don't want them to do to you!? You think it's normal!?"
- "Of course not, you know what I meant."
- "Football is the only option you have?"
- "I'm not smart enough to do anything else."

- "Do you like it?"

- "Football? Yeah, it's fun," Troy told with no conviction.

Jane looked at him with a frown. She saw on his face he wasn't enjoying this much football. But why was he in the team? She always wondered why people were forcing themselves to do something they didn't like.

- "What else do you like?" Jane continued to cheer him up.

- "I don't know..." Troy shyly answered, avoiding her eyes.

- "What? You are ashamed?"

- "No I'm not! I'm Troy Jefferson! I'm the coolest guy of High school, what do you think!?" the young boy answered on the defensive.

- "Calm down Troy! You have nothing to prove, I won't mock you or tell everyone," Jane reassured.

- "Yeah...but you will find it ridiculous, but okay, why not."

Troy looked around to be sure no one was listening. Even if he was trusting Jane, he knew if his friends would hear what he was going to say, they would mock him. He got closer to Jane and explained with his voice low:

- "My mom is a dance teacher, and, she is specialist of folklore dances of many countries but, her favorite one is a dance named pizzica, a dance from South of Italia."

- "I know this dance," Jane smiled.

- "Really? How?"

- "Um, my sister took me to a dance festival, and I saw a group of teens dancing it and, after, I loved it so much that I wanted to dance like them, so my sister taught me."

- "Wait, you can dance pizzica?"

- "Um, yeah, I'm not the best, but I'm not that bad, I guess."

- "I love dancing pizzica, I always thought it was a funny dance, and it's harder than it looks!"

- "Oh yeah totally! The first time I was so frustrating to fail every steps," Jane chuckled.

- "Me too! My mom was doing it so easily and me, I was there being so heavy on my feet!"

Jane was the first person he met who was able to dance pizzica. He was glad she didn't think it was stupid for a boy to dance, for the first time he was feeling good with someone else, she was actually caring about him.

While they were talking, Max and Will didn't stop watching them, wondering what they were talking about.

- "They seem to have fun," Will stated.

- "Yeah, it's weird, Troy is an asshole!" Max told.

- "But not Jane, she is like, kind with everyone."

- "Yes, she is. But Troy is a bully, I don't want him to hurt her."

- "Jane is strong, and, I don't think he will hurt her, he seems...in love."

- "Oh please, that's gross," Max pouted.

Will chuckled. He always liked Max's outspokenness, most people didn't like it, but that was what he was preferring, at least, she wasn't letting people bullying her, not like him. He was envious of her confidence, when she had something to say, she was saying it and was waiting for reactions. Him, it was the opposite. He was staying quiet to not have reactions and all the attention. He noticed Max was still looking at Jane and was feeling guilty for imposing himself next to her.

- "I'm sorry," the young boy apologised.

- "What?" Max asked, quickly turning her head to him. "Why are you sorry?"

- "Because you wanted to be next to Jane, and instead you are next to me because I can't defend myself."

- "Don't be stupid, I'm happy to be next to you. I can talk to Jane later, don't worry," the redhead reassured.

Will weakly smiled to her while Max wrapped her arm around his shoulders. He was convinced she was saying that because she had pity but tried to not show it. He didn't want to lose her, she was one of his closest friends.

Max didn't like to see Will like that, he was her best friend, and she wanted him to be happy. But she knew he was always blaming himself for everything. It was kinda true that she wanted to be with Jane, but she was as happy to be with him, especially if he had to make the travel next to Troy. She preferred knowing him with her, and Jane seemed to be okay with Troy, so there was nothing to worry about right now.

### 13. Sister Bernadette

The buses finally reached their destination. A heap of teens arose in the street, trying to take back their bags from the hold of the vehicles. The party managed to reunite in the hall of the hotel, surrounded by excited teenagers screaming and laughing. It was not a luxurious hostel, it had only one star, but it was enough for a scholar travel.

- "Where is Jane?" Dustin asked.

- "With Troy," Max answered with an annoyed tone.

- "But why?"

- "She seems to like him," Will told.

The teachers needed an entire minute to have the silence from their classes. They explained that, for now, they were going to install their stuff in their rooms, but they had to chose their rooms before, according to the number of beds. The four boys left the girls to have a room for four. Beverly and Max tried to find Jane in the crowd to ask her to be with them. Max finally found her, alone and looking around like a child searching for their parents. Bev wrapped her arm around Jane's shoulder and took her with them. Jane was relieved to see them, she was beginning to panic.

- "A room with us, you agree?" Bev asked.

- "Yes, of course," Jane smiled.

- "Cool, I'll write our names."

Beverly let go Jane, letting Max and Jane together. The two girls managed to go apart of the crowd.

- "I thought I would be alone," Jane told with a shaking voice.

- "Hey, you okay?" Max frowned.

- "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine, I just...don't like when there is too many



people around me, that's all."

- "Like a phobia?"

- "Kinda, I guess. It gets me anxious, I was happy to see you because I don't know where I would go !"

- "Troy abandoned you?"

- "No no, I told him I was ok because I was seeing you, but then you disappeared before reappearing with Bev," Jane explained.

Max nodded, a bit doubtful.

- "Are you really friend with him?"

- "I don't know, I think he is changing, but for now, I told him I didn't want to be friend with a bully so it's a no. But we have good exchange."

- "I don't know if he is changing, but you seem to like him a lot," Max stated with a bit irritation.

- "I won't date him if it's what scare you," Jane told with a annoyed tone.

- "I don't care, you date who you want!"

- "As long as it's not Troy."

- "Troy or another from the Football team. You're too good for them."

- "Really?" Jane asked with a raised eyebrow.

- "Of course, you're too kind, too smart, and too pretty for them," Max answered with a small smile.

Jane pursed her lips to not show her smile but had to look down to hide the blush growing on her cheeks. Every time a girl was friendly with her, she couldn't help but think she was flirting with her. But she was smart enough to know it wasn't true because Max was normal. She tried to go down to Earth before it became suspect.

Luckily, Beverly approached them.

- "There was only a room of five when I arrived, so we are with Clara and Jenifer," the redhead explained.

- "Okay, cool," Max smiled.

- "What did you do to her, Max? Jane is all red," Bev chuckled.

Jane wide opened her eyes. She thought the blush was light enough to disappear fast but apparently not.

- "I told her she was too good for Troy."

- "And you blush? Aw that's too cute!" Beverly told with an enthusiast tone and higher voice than usual.

The two redheads lightly chuckled while Jane was hoping she was not redder than before. She wasn't finding it cute but embarrassing and ridiculous to be such sensitive, especially every time a girl was just acting like a friend.

Now that everyone had their rooms, the teachers gave them their keys to allow them to install their stuff before beginning the first day of their scholar travel. The five arrived in their room. There were three bunk beds, a wardrobe, and a door for the bathroom.

- "You prefer the bed above or under?" Max asked.

- "I don't care, and you?" Jane answered.

- "Above, to dominate everyone."

- "If I'm above, you won't dominate me," Jane smirked.

- "Just because you're taller than me doesn't mean I'll let you dominate me," the redhead joked.

The girls chose their beds, Jane, Max, and Beverly took the top three while Jenifer was under Max and Clara under Beverly. Once installed, they joined the rest of the teens in the hall, waiting for their first activity. They were going to visit a Christian school and eat at their

cafeteria before visiting a farm.

They took the bus and walked thirty minutes on a dirt road to access the school. The party noticed that Jane was really quiet during the walk. They thought it was because she was wearing her leather jacket with spikes, and maybe she was worried to not be allowed to enter. Or she was just tired. They finally arrived in front of the school. It was a cold building with a church next to it. They were welcomed by a strict Sister named Sister Bernadette. She was straightened, her hands in her back, the chin up with a mean face. She was not very tall, but she was very skinny, almost emaciated, and old. She forced everyone to pair up and began to analyse all the teens. She stopped at Jane, eyed her before staring a long moment with her before saying :

- "Welcome back, Jane."

The young girl didn't answer, too worried of what she could say. The party and the other teens looked at them interacting, not understanding why there was a tension. Max, who was next to her, noted her hands closed in fists, like if she was containing her anger.

- "I will pray harder for you," the Sister said, touching Jane's jacket with disgust and disdain.

She continued her round, letting an angry and embarrassed Jane. Max looked at her friends who all shrugged.

- "Are you okay?" Max softly asked.

Jane slowly nodded, still looking down and clenching her jaw.

- "You were in this school before?"

- "Yeah, they apparently didn't forget me," Jane answered, slowly opening her fists.

Max noted her red hands and the marks of her nails in her palm. She would have liked to wrap her arm around her shoulders but with the spikes she didn't know if it would hurt or not. She tried to take her hand, but Jane refused brutally and placed her hand on her torso, touching her sheriff's star-shaped pendent around her neck.

During the entire visit, Jane stayed back, not really looking and listening, with a closed face. Some of the teenagers in class recognised her because they were murmuring things while pointing at her. Sister Bernadette gave dark looks to Jane sometime without saying anything, but she wasn't thinking less. The more Max was walking in those corridors, the more she thought she would never stay in a place like this, she probably would have ran away, but she didn't know if it was worse or better than her home. Someone trying to open a door caught everyone's attention. They turned and saw Jane insisting on a doorknob.

- "You are missing it?" Sister Bernadette asked with a cold tone.

- "Oh hell no!"

- "Jane!" the Sister yelled, approaching her with a quick walking. "Keep acting like this, and I offer you an other turn inside."

- "You can't, I'm not stuck here anymore," the young girl replied with anger.

- "Do not blaspheme, it's a place of worship, a Holy place."

- "A Holy shitty pla-"

Jane was cut by Sister Bernadette's hand slapping her cheek. She grabbed Jane by her jacket and blocked her against the wall behind before taking a stick from under her gown and threatening Jane with it. The young girl looked at it with scared eyes and was breathing heavily with her nose, her hands against the wall like if she wanted to push it. Max felt stupid, she had already lived something similar, but it was with Neil, Billy, and a belt. She wanted to intervene, but she didn't know if it would work, with Neil, it didn't, it was even worse. Mr. Clarke put his hand on the Sister's shoulder and asked her to calm down, forcing her to step back. The woman slowly lowered the stick, still looking deeply in Jane's eyes.

- "I don't want her to stay," Sister Bernadette sharply told.

Jane didn't answer, but she didn't want to stay neither, she had too many bad memories in this place and preferred staying far. Mr. Clarke

agreed and accompanied Jane outside. The rest of the teens continued in an heavy silence. No one dared to move or talk or even breath. They were still shocked by the scene. Max was regretting for not moving, Jane was not like Billy, she wouldn't have been mad at her for trying to help. She felt anger growing inside her, everyone was looking down when she was walking near them but not her, she didn't know why she should look down, she never did before with anyone, and she wouldn't give her this pleasure. She was seeing it was annoying her, which was giving Max more envy to maintain her look.

While the group was visiting the school, Mr.Clarke and Jane waited outside, near the bus. Jane was sitting on the floor, snatching some grass, facing the horizon to not have the building in her vision. Mr.Clarke was a bit farther, watching the girl being mad. He decided to approach her and crouched next to her with a warm smile.

- "What have you done to her to be hated like that?" the man asked with a soft tone.

Jane shrugged, avoiding his eyes.

- "If we knew it would have make you uncomfortable, we would have change the program."

- "You can't change a program just for one girl," Jane stated with a sharp tone. "And I hoped they would have forgotten me..."

- "So I deduct you weren't there last year, right?"

- "I was (counts on her fingers) on my thirteenth year. My sister lost her job so the State decided I couldn't stay with her and placed me here. I was angry so I was...turbulent."

- "Enough to not be forgotten apparently," the man lightly chuckled.

- "Yeah, apparently..."

- "What was the stick for?"

- "Punishment."

- "Well, one thing is sure, it's the first year and last year we visit this school."

The teacher stood again and let the young girl alone. While the teens were eating at the cafeteria, Mr. Clarke bought a sandwich for him and for Jane. After a moment, they saw everyone arriving, the party going to Jane who was still a bit shakened. Four Sisters, including Sister Bernadette, approached Jane with their cross and placed an hand on the young girl. They began a prayer while Jane was sighing loudly with her mouth and rolling her eyes. She patiently waited them to finish, under the amused eyes of her friends. At the end of the prayer, one of the Sister gave her a cross, but Jane threw it and quickly walked in the bus.

- "What was in the room?" Troy asked, still next to her.

- "It was the punishment room, I wanted to see if it had changed," Jane answered.

- "The punishment room? What was inside?"

- "Many things, like different sticks or whips."

- "Whips!?"

- "Yeah, one time I was unable to sit during two weeks."

Troy wide opened his eyes. He didn't need and didn't want more details to understand where they whipped her.

During the visit of the farm, Jane was feeling better. The bad moment was over and she could enjoy seeing the animals and how a farm worked without worrying about the Sisters. He prepared an activity where they could milk the cows. Jane was with Dustin and Lucas, and the three teens had difficulties to have some white drops.

- "I think your hand is too down," Lucas told.

Jane, who was holding the udder, moved her hand like he said and pressed it, but it was still not working.

- "More up," Dustin said.

The young boy crouched next to her to watch her. Jane changed her hand and pressed again the udder. This time a throw of milk left the udder and finished on Dustin's face who was covered of the white liquid. He licked his lips before stating :

- "Yep, you got it."

Lucas and Jane looked at each other before laughing while Dustin wiped his wet face with an amused smile.

The farmer gave at each teen a cheese he made especially for them as a present. The senior years went back to their hotel, ate at the cafeteria before going to their rooms.

Max and Beverly were sitting on Jane's bed with the girl in the middle. They were reading some magazines, Max was reading a cook magazine, Bev a magazine about skateboard, and Jane a magazine about Hard Rock music while Jenifer and Clara were sharing the last rumors they heard. The murmurs stopped which intrigued the three girls reading their magazines.

- "Jaaaaane?" Jenifer called.

- "Yeeeeees?" the young girl answered without stopping reading.

The two girls jumped from Clara's bed and went to Jane's, their arms on the mattress with their heads on their hands, watching the three girls reading.

- "Are you and Troy dating?" Jenifer asked with a smile.

Max and Beverly dropped their magazines and watched Jane, interested by her answer. Jane stayed hid behind her magazine, her eyes wide opened.

- "No."

- "That's not what everyone says," Clara told.

- (drops her magazine) "Even Troy?" Jane frowned.

- "I don't know, but he doesn't say no."

- "But he doesn't say yes either, right?"

- "Right, but as everyone was saying you were..."

- "Well, I don't. We are not dating, you can tell everyone, but I'm sure they won't believe you. People believe what they want."

Jane raised again her magazine to read it, but the other girls kept looking at her like if they were waiting for something.

- "What?" Jane asked, dropping again her magazine.

- "Is there a boy you like?" Jenifer smirked.

- "No."

- "Really? Even Mike?" Beverly intervened.

- "I like him, as a friend."

- "Not more?"

- "No! We already went on a date, and it never went further."

- "And Will?" Clara asked.

- "No, he is my friend. Just my friend."

Max felt sorry for Will. She noted him having a small crush on Jane, but the girl seemed really closed to a new relationship. She didn't know why, but she felt her heart warming too.

- "What happened with Sister Bernadette?" Clara asked.

- "Nothing. It's not important," Jane said with a small voice, hiding again behind her magazine.

The four girls looked at each other with a pout, feeling like they did a bad thing.

- "We should go to sleep," Max told.

The girls agreed and went in their own beds.



## 14. Dinosaurs

After a copious breakfast, the teens took the bus in direction of their first visit: the Natural History museum. Mike and Jane sat next to each other, Will with Beverly, Max with Dustin, and Lucas with Gabrielle. When Jenifer and Clara passed near Jane, they raised their eyebrows with a small smirk before continuing their way.

- "Is there a problem?" Mike frowned.

- "They think I have a crush on you," Jane answered with an annoyed tone.

- "Really?"

- "Yeah, even Bev! They hadn't stopped asking me if I had a crush on Troy, then you, then Will. I thought it would never end!"

- "They are just curious, you are new, they want to know you better," Mike smiled.

- "I guess, but it's embarrassing..."

- "Don't worry, when they will understand that there is nothing between us, or between you and Troy, or between you and Will, they will stop."

- "But when?"

Mike pouted and shrugged. They spent the travel showing each other their magazines, music magazines for Jane and science magazines for Mike.

When they arrived, their teachers gave them two hours to visit the museum as they wanted. Jane stayed with the party. Beverly and Dustin insisted to see the dinosaurs so the group followed them walking quickly through the diverse rooms. They arrived face to face with a Tyrannosaurus.

- "It's really the best dinosaur! Right Max?" Mike smirked with a provocative tone.

The party looked at the redhead, who crossed her arms and raised her eyebrow, with a smile, except Jane who wasn't understanding.

- "I still think Triceratops are better," Max stated.

- "Tyrannosaurus steps on them, and they are dead!" Lucas intervened.

- "Have you seen their horns!? Three horns! Headbutt, and your Tyrannosaurus is dead!"

- "She is right, it's like the Stegosaurus," Dustin told.

- "What ?" Max frowned.

- "They always have a mace with them!"

- "But they are so slow!"

- "You've ever tried to run with a mace?"

Max turned to the others to see if she was the only one to find it weird, but seeing their faces, they were as lost as her.

- "Bev, which one is your favorite?" Dustin asked.

- "Velociraptor," the redhead affirmed with a smile.

- "Oh please! This lezard?"

- "They are fast, at least," Max added.

- "I kinda prefer the Velociraptor too," Will intervened. "I mean, they are fast, and they have this big claw to cut throats."

- "Yeah, Will you're the best," Beverly smiled, wrapping her arm around his shoulders.

- "Cause you think your Velociraptor is flexible enough to cut a throat?" Mike said, raising his leg in the air.

- "Just because you can't doesn't mean they couldn't!" Max mocked.

Mike winced at her while the others were laughing.

- "A bite in the leg, the prey is on the floor, and then you cut the throat," Beverly explained like it was nothing.

- "Nobody prefers the Pterodactyl?" Jane intervened with a frown.

The party turned to her, waiting for her explanation.

- "They can fly!" the young girl stated, moving her arms like wings.

- "Yeah, that's all," Lucas answered.

- "It's the best thing ever! You can go where you want! When there is no more food, you just have to go somewhere else!"

- "I bite you, and you disappear!"

- "I can fly high enough to be far from you! You really prefer your big mouth and your stunted arms than a majestic Pterodactyl with beautiful wings?"

- "Yes," Mike and Lucas answered in a same voice.

- "You know nothing about life," Jane grumbled with a joking tone.

They all laughed, Lucas pushing gently her head. Will took pictures of his friends with their favorite dinosaur before continuing the visit of the museum.

After the two hours, the group of friends joined the others in the hall. Troy saw Jane a bit farther of her friends and took the opportunity to go to her.

- "Hey Jane," the boy smiled.

- "Hey Troy, what's your favorite dinosaur ?" Jane asked.

- "Um...Brontosaurus."

- "Not a bad choice," Jane pouted.

- "And you?"

- "Pterodactyl, they can fly."
- "Oh yeah, that's cool too, but Brontosaurus are taller."
- "But they are slow," the young girl stated.
- "If you want," the boy chuckled.
- "Do you know that everyone think we are dating?"
- "Oh yeah, I heard."
- "And you don't care?"
- "No, I mean, I'm kinda...honored that they think I have a chance to date you," Troy smiled.
- "Okay...You know we are not, right?"
- "Of course I know, I'm a bully and you don't want to be friend with a bully."
- "Um...yeah...I'm sure the real Troy is not a bully," Jane told with a gentle tone.

The two teens looked at each other with soft eyes before separating and joining their friends. The teachers gave them two hours of free time, allowing the teens to visit the town by their own. The party and Jane bought hot-dogs and ate it in front of a fountain. Beverly began a water fight with Lucas, Dustin, and Max while Jane, Mike, and Will were watching them, laughing. Max was going to water Lucas, but she slipped and fell miserably her entire body in the water. Her friends began to laugh more, pointing her with their fingers. Max chuckled and decided to have her revenge. She stood and wrapped her arms around Jane's waist before raising her and plunging her in the water. Jane wiped her wet face while Max was giggling next to her. The two girls began to laugh together, accompanied by the party.

Once dried, Mike proposed them to find new magazines to read. They went in a tobacco store, in the magazines' section. Max and Bev searched for magazines about skateboard while Lucas, Dustin, and

Will were here for video games ones. Mike and Jane were not looking for special magazines. The black haired-boy saw one which made him smile and looked around to be sure they were alone before showing it to Jane.

- "Mike!" Jane grumbled with wide opened eyes and her face becoming red. "Not in public."

- "There is no one around! And there is nothing wrong to just take a look," the young boy smirked.

- "Human body is not an object you can put half naked, or, in that case, totally naked, in magazines for pervert eyes," Jane stated in a low voice.

- "Oh please, you're gonna tell me you've never had a look on this type of magazines?"

- "No...sometimes, but that's not the point."

- "There is nothing wrong to just look at it with eyes...which are just enjoying, not pervert."

- "Be quick."

Mike opened the magazine with a big smile and showed Jane some girls. The young girl watched it with an eye supposed distracted but she couldn't help but watch it with a small satisfied smirk, biting her bottom lip.

- "What do you prefer in a girl?" Mike asked in a murmur.

- "Her personality."

- "Her personality?"

- "Yeah, if she has a beautiful personality, she obviously has a beautiful body. Many girls have beautiful bodies but if there is no personality inside which match with mine, they are not interesting, for me. And you?"

- "Um...I, I don't know, your answer is too pure, I can't answer after

that!"

- "I like their breasts too. You can answer now," Jane chuckled.

- "Oh nice, me too."

- "Hey guys!" Lucas called, approaching them.

In the panic, Mike threw the magazine while Jane took the first one in front of her, and opened it like if they were reading.

- "What are you doing?" the black boy frowned.

- "Jane was showing me (looks at the magazine) some...retirement homes..."

- "Retirement homes? And you are reading it upside down?"

- "It's...funnier," Jane answered.

- "Oookay, I'm gonna act like if it was normal. We were thinking to go to the arcade to see which games they have, you both come?"

- "Yeah sure," Mike smiled while Jane was nodding.

Lucas slowly nodded, looking at them with a judging frown before going back to the others. Jane and Mike turned to each other and laughed out loud of the ridiculous situation.

When they arrived at the Arcade, Mike found R-Type, the one his sister bought him for Christmas and played it, with Beverly watching him, without stopping because:

- "At least when I lose I don't see a damn MadMax appearing with the best score," the black-haired boy joked.

Lucas, Dustin, and Will went to Double Dragons while Jane and Max chose to play Street Fighter. The two girls went in unrestrained matches, and Jane was losing all of them.

- "Damn!" Jane grumbled, kicking the machine. "Why do I always lose!?"

- "Because I'm better than you," Max smiled, amused to see Jane like that.

- "I'm sure you cheated."

- "I don't need to," the redhead chuckled.

- "I let you win."

- "Oh now you let me win? I'm not a cheater anymore?"

Jane shook her head with a small laugh and pushed gently Max who was chuckling. Their free time was almost over so the group of friends decided to join the rest of the class. They finished their day with a visit of the historical Center before going back to their hotel, worn.

Jane was laying on the bed under hers, reading one of Beverly's magazines about skateboard while Max was on the right, on the wall side, reading a magazine about video games she just bought, and Beverly on Jane's left, reading one of Jane's magazines about Hard Rock music.

- "I bought new bras," began Clara, "what do you think?"

Jane wide opened her eyes and hid more behind her magazine. She tried to focus on what she was reading, ignoring Max and Beverly's compliments.

- "Jane? What do you think?" Clara insisted.

- "It's nice," Jane answered with a higher voice than usual, sinking in the pillow and getting closer the magazine to her face.

- "You didn't even look at it," the brunette chuckled.

- "I trust your taste."

- "Come on, Jane, don't be so modest."

The young girl took a deep breathe and slowly lowered the magazine under her eyes, hiding the rest of her face blushing when she was

watching Clara's new bra. She was beginning to believe that this four girls were here just to embarrass her without knowing it.

- "Really cute," Jane quickly answered, raising her magazine again.

- "Oh my god Jane, you are truly prude!" Jenifer stated with a big smile.

- "...Yes."

- "Aw, that's so cute!" Beverly intervened, caressing lightly Jane's red cheek.

- "Is it because your year in this Christian school?" Max asked.

- "Yeah, yeah..."

Jane was glad they were thinking she was prude and not lesbian, they would not hate her for this at least.



## 15. End of the trip

The teachers woke up the teens early. They had to pack their stuff before going to a bakery. The breakfast was quiet, the teens trying to open their eyes above their hot chocolates or bowls of cereals. Max was eating in front of Jane, who was already full of energy even if she had small eyes. The redhead didn't realise it, but she was a bit staring at her, thinking those small eyes were cute small eyes, her messy hair in a bun was looking good on her, her fresh skin with her soft cheeks must be nice to touch. She was wondering how someone could look so beautiful while herself was looking like a total mess. Jane noticed her staring and smiled to her which made her smile and a little blushe.

- "You okay?" Jane asked, keeping her voice down to not break the quiet atmosphere.

- "Yes, why?"

- "I don't know, you were looking at me and now you blush a little."

- "Oh, it's early, I don't really control my body for now," the redhead joked.

Jane had a small chuckle before continuing to eat her toast with cherry jam. Max didn't know why, but she felt a nice sensation in her stomach when she heard the other girl's laugh. It was making her happy to see her friend happy.

The party and Jane were at the same work table with a ball of bread dough in front of each one. Max, Jane, Will, and Dustin were in front of Mike, Lucas, and Beverly. The baker gave them the explanations at the same time they were preparing their breads.

- "We woke up early to prepare a bread!?" Mike grumbled.

- "It would have surprised me if you hadn't growl," Max mocked.

- "I wanted to sleep more."

- "We all wanted it," Lucas stated.

- "Jane was already awake," Beverly said, kneading her dough.
- "But why?" Dustin asked, not understanding.
- "I don't know, I always woke up at 5am, I'm used to it, I guess."
- "5 am!? You don't like sleeping!?" Will intervened, looking at her with wide opened eyes.
- "I do," Jane chuckled. "I ride my bike or practice running sometimes."
- "Oh, to keep you in good shape."
- "Exactly."
- "Why do you inflict you this?" Mike asked.
- "To keep her in good shape, you don't listen to her when she talk?" Beverly mocked.
- "But why this early?"
- "Because I don't have the time the rest of the day," Jane explained.
- "Even after school?" Lucas told.
- "I work, and then I do my homeworks."
- "What kind of bike do you have?" Max asked, knowing the others would ask more questions too intrusive.
- "A mountain bike and a BMX."
- "Oh cool! You could come with us at the skate park!" Dustin told.
- "Um, yeah, why not," Jane shyly smiled.

Mr. Clarke asked them to be quiet when the baker was giving them some information about his work. They remained silent until they finished their breads and placed them in the oven. The baker showed them the bakery and explained his daily. When he finished, he gave them their breads they could eat just after.

As they had a free time until the beginning of the afternoon, the friends decided to walk in the town and to do some shopping. They found a shop with skateboards and various bikes and ran inside, watching everything with kids' eyes. They bought nothing even if they wanted everything but tried some skateboards and bikes before being kicked by the seller. Max found a leather shop and brought Jane inside. The two friends tried many jackets in diverse colors and watched the bags and accessories but without buying anything because it was too expensive. In fact, Max saw a leather bracelet which could be liked by Jane and took the opportunity of the other girl talking with Will and Lucas outside to buy it.

- "Where do you wanna eat?" Lucas asked to Max who was joining them.

- "I don't know, where can we eat?"

- "We can buy a panini or sandwiches or whatever and eat near the fountain or we can find a restaurant," Will told. "Mike wanted to try the restaurant at the corner."

- "Then, let's try this restaurant," the redhead smiled.

They joined Mike, Dustin, and Beverly, who were already in front of the place, and asked for a table. The decoration was rustic but warm, with lots of plants. They sat on a table between the entrance door and the toilets but had a beautiful view on the pedestrian street. Jane ordered pastas with a cheese sauce, Mike, Beverly, Lucas, and Max chose a steak with french fries while Dustin and Will ate lasagnas.

Once they finished they had to run to join the others as they didn't saw the time flying. They arrived near the rest of the class and heard the group of cheerleaders and Football players mocking them.

- "Look at the losers trying to do sport," Alban began.

- "So pathetic," Abigail chuckled.

- "Frog face should have jumped, he would go faster," Delphine added.

They continued to mock them, knowing they were heard by the

group of friends. Max was going to answer, but Mike stopped her and pouted like to say it was useless. Jane looked at them with a sad frown, before giving a friendly tap to Mike.

- "What do you think, Troy ?" Rick teased, nudging him.

Troy started. He hadn't even noticed them, too busy to watch Jane in the corner of his eyes.

- "What?" the young boy frowned.

Alban showed the party and Jane like if it was obvious.

- "You have nothing to say!?" Alban said with a shocked tone.

- "Um...no, what do you want me to say?"

- "The Queer had just ran, and you have nothing to say!?"

Troy looked up at Will. He noted he was fearing his remarks, and Troy realised he was tired of this. Maybe before he would have said something but after the conversation with Jane, he was a bit lost and didn't know who he really was.

- "No, nothing," Troy pouted.

Troy and Jane exchanged a smile. She hoped he was doing this because he wanted to change. The group of the cool kids watched the party and Jane going a bit farther, Troy unable to look away from Jane.

- "Okay, I get it, you're in love," Rick stated, waggling his eyebrows.

- "Naaah, she is too good for me," Troy softly said with a bit sadness.

The young boy stood and made a movement with his head to tell them to follow him. Abigail felt a pinch in her heart, she spent the last three years trying to seduce Troy, and this Jane just appeared and she had all his attention.

They took the bus to their last visit, an old cathedral. It was so high that it seemed to touch the sky. When they arrived in front of the

building, Jane had the pleasant surprise to see Sister Bernadette...again. The woman didn't say anything this time, she just looked at her with the same disgusted and disdainful face. She forced them again to be with a partner before entering. Max went next to Jane and smiled to her. Jane had a weak smile, but Max knew it was because of the Sister and not her. They entered the cathedral and the problem began. The Sister asked them to do the sign of the Cross. All obeyed except Jane who crossed her arms.

- "This is why you have the Devil inside you," Sister Bernadette sharply told, coming to her with an heavy walking. "You turn your back to the only one who could help you."

- "I don't need help," Jane answered with an angry face.

- "Yes, you do! You are in the deny for now but one day you will understand."

- "I'm not the one who takes too seriously a fictional book."

- "DON'T INSULT THE ALMIGHTY IN HIS DWELLING, DAUGHTER OF SATAN! (brandished her cross to her) GET OUT OF HERE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO HERE, YOU AND YOUR DIABOLICAL GET-UP!"

Jane looked deeply into her eyes before going outside. Max was mad, everytime she had a chance to be alone with Jane, someone was always getting her away from her.

- "Mike?" Max called in a murmur.

- "Yes?" the young boy answered in a low voice.

- "You don't mind if I sit next to Jane in the bus? I bought her something, and I would like to give it her."

- "You are supposed to be next to who?"

- "Will."

- "Okay, no problem."

Max smiled to him to thank him. They finished the visit in silence, listening to the Sister explaining the paintings they were watching.

When they finished, they found Jane sitting on the floor, her headphone on her head and her eyes closed. Beverly sat next to her and blew on her face which surprised the other girl.

- "How was it?" Jane asked more to be polite than because she was caring.

- "Interesting, but a bit too long," Beverly answered. "What are you listening?"

- "Mozart."

The redhead frowned a « what ? » and took quickly the headphone to listen to it. When she heard the drums and the electric guitars, she understood Jane was mocking her.

- "Ha ha," Bev sarcastically said. "I didn't know Mozart had worked with David Bowie."

Jane had an amused smile and took back her headphone. Dustin and Lucas helped the two girls to stand before going in the bus. Max sat next to Jane, which didn't bother the girl for Max's relief. When Troy passed next to them, he gave a smile to Jane who smiled back. Max frowned at her with an interrogative look, and Jane, when she noticed, wide opened her eyes like if she had done something bad without knowing what.

- "What?" Jane asked with a child voice.

- "Nothing, you are not the first girl who fall for the bad guy," Max said, pinching her lips together.

- "I don't love him."

- "That's what they all say."

- "So it's your turn now? First Mike, then Will, and now you? Then it's Lucas? Dustin? Or Beverly?" Jane stated with a calm tone.

- "It's obvious, Jane. You are still my friend anyway."
- "I hope I am! The person I date shouldn't be a problem," Jane told, not without back thoughts.
- "Just avoid assholes, it will be easier."
- "I don't love him, and I don't think he is an asshole."
- "Yeah if you want. Anyway, I have something for you," Max smiled.
- "Really?" Jane asked with a lighting smile.
- "Close your eyes and hold out your arm."

Jane obeyed and gave her left arm to her friend. She felt something wrapping her wrist and understood it was a bracelet. When she re-opened her eyes, she saw a wide leather bracelet with a red stone in the middle.

- "Oh Max ! I love it, it's so beautiful!" Jane said with her mouth wide opened and looking closely to the jewel. "How can I thank you?"

- "Your smile already thanked me," Max answered with a small voice and feeling her cheeks a bit blushing.

Jane smiled to her, she noticed her red cheeks but didn't want to think she was flirting with her, she was just friendly, and she blushed maybe because she was not the type to show emotion.

Max didn't know why her cheeks were burning, it was just a present for a friend, she had already given presents before, but it was the first time she was feeling this warm bubbles in her stomach.

- "Why ?" Jane asked.

- "I don't know, because I like you," Max softly smiled. "I could find many different reasons, like, it's a present to welcome you in Hawkins because it's complicated to arrive in a school in the middle of the year, or to cheer you up because you had some bad memories here, or just because I wanted to see you smile."

"She is not flirting !" Jane told internally to herself.

She knew she was easily seduced, but she didn't want to see possibilities where there were definitely none. She just smiled, not really knowing what to say. The number of people who gave her presents just to see her smile was very low, and she was always surprised to see someone else than her sister wanting it.

The two friends spent the end of the travel exchanging about music, movies, video games, and school. Max was glad to finally have her moment with Jane.



## 16. Soda

It was the last week before the Winter vacation. Jane was at the library, sitting at a table with Troy next to her. The two teens were working on their English project for the end of the school year. Even if they had the time to prepare, both wanted to take their time to do it correctly. They needed good marks to be accepted in their futur colleges, and they were not the best students of the school, not the worst neither, but in the average.

A bit farther, Abigail was watching them interacting and even chuckling sometimes. She didn't know why he was finding this Jane so interesting, but she was determined to be sure it would stop. She approached them, her soda in her hand, and sat in front of them. The two teens were so absorbed by their work that they didn't notice her. It was making her angrier.

Jane was the first one to see her. She looked at her without saying anything, not knowing what to tell her. They were not friends, and Abigail was a cheerleader, the kind of girls Jane liked to watch but not to talk to. She nudged the boy next to her who watched her before moving his head in direction of the other girl.

- "Hey, what's up?" Troy murmured.

- "What are you doing?" the blonde girl asked, looking at their books with a raised eyebrow.

- "Our English project."

- "Ooh, you have a project together, really cute," the girl said with an irritated tone.

- "It's just a work," Jane intervened.

- "Yeah, just a work," Abigail told with an exaggerated smile for Jane.

Jane and Troy looked at each other with the same lost eyes. The young boy stood to search for an other book under the desperate look of Jane meaning « don't leave me alone with her » and the big smile

of Abigail.

Jane tried to focus on her work, but she was feeling the look of her colleague on her and was feeling embarrassed and oppressed.

- "I know what you are doing," Abigail stated, taping the table with her nails.

- "And what am I doing?" Jane asked without looking up.

Abigail stood, placed her hands on the table, facing Jane, and looked at her from above, wanting to impress her.

Jane slowly moved her head to watch her, not knowing what was going to happen next.

- "You are just a random girl, you think you are different from the other girls, but you are not. When he has what he wants with you, he will get rid of you," Abigail said, slowly.

- "What are you talking about?" Jane frowned.

Abigail approached her face closer to Jane who was trying to not fade.

- "Troy is mine, you have no chance with him, he will fuck you and then you won't see him again, is that clear? He loves me, he just doesn't know it yet."

- "Um...okay," Jane answered, hoping she would stop.

- "Don't act like you don't care, it's what they all say."

- "If he was loving you, you don't think he would at least care about you?" the brunette provoked.

Abigail felt outraged and attacked. Without thinking, she grabbed her soda and threw it on the girl on the other side of the table.

Jane, covered of the dark liquid, stood angrily of surprise and watched the extent of damage. The books, the notebooks, and her tee-shirt - she was caring a lot- were all ruined because of her

jealousy. She didn't say anything, she didn't want everyone to look at her, it would make it worse.

Troy arrived and saw the two girls stood, killing each other with their eyes. He went to Jane and tried to dry her with a tissue.

- "What happened?" Troy asked, seeing the soda on their work.

Abigail killed more Jane with her eyes. She didn't want the other girl to speak.

- "She dropped her drink," Jane answered, gritting her teeth.

- "Fuck, Abi! You could be careful! You ruined our work and Jane's clothes," Troy grumbled.

- "I'm sorry," the blonde girl mumbled, feeling a bit ashamed.

Jane and Troy tried to save the few papers that survived. Jane was pissed because the tee-shirt she was wearing was a present from someone who was very important for her and now she could just throw it! But she could understand Abigail's jealousy, Jane was spending a lot of time with Troy and it was interpreted in the wrong way by everyone. If only she knew Troy had no chance with her, nothing of this would happen.

Jane took her stuff and let the two teens in the library, running to her home to change her clothes before going to work at the store.

## 17. Skatepark

The week was arriving at its end, and the group of friends met at the skatepark. All of them were here, Max and Beverly skating and Lucas and Dustin doing some BMX tricks, while Will and Mike were sitting on a rail next to them with their bags at their feet.

Jane arrived a bit later with her green BMX, wearing a helmet, customized like a pilot helmet, and protections at her knees and elbows.

- "Hey Jane," Mike smiled. "Nice gear."

- "Thanks, I don't wanna die," Jane answered.

- "We see," Will told.

Jane gave a quick look to the bowl where the two boys and the two girls were doing some tricks. They were all wearing helmets except Max. Jane stood and took off her helmet before approaching the bowl.

- "Max!" Jane called.

The redhead stopped her trick and rolled to Jane.

- "What's up?" Max greeted.

- "You should wear a helmet."

- "You stopped me just for telling me this?"

- "If you fall on your head you can be paralyzed if not dead!"

- "God Jane, you're not my mom!" Max growled.

- "Yeah, me, I actually care about you," Jane firmly stated.

Max sighed loudly and rolled her eyes. She stared a moment at Jane who was insisting with her eyes. The redhead knew she wouldn't let her before she wore a helmet, but she was happy to see Jane

worrying for her.

- "You are annoying, do you know that?" Max said.

- "Just wear a fucking helmet!" Jane replied.

- "Fine!"

The redhead went to her stuff and grabbed her helmet. She put it in her head, watching Jane. The other girl shook her head and closed the straps under Max's chin. While she was doing it, the redhead noticed the bracelet she gave her and couldn't hold a small smile.

- "I can skate now, mom?" Max smirked.

- "I'm not doing it to annoy you, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I prefer being annoying than seeing you struggling with your wheelchair," Jane softly explained. "You would be unbearable."

- "Fuck you!" the redhead chuckled.

Max pushed gently Jane before going back to the bowl, followed by Jane. After some tricks failed, Jane stopped and joined the two boys on the rail.

- "I'm so bad at BMX," Jane stated with a smile.

- "You are still better at BMX than basketball," Will joked.

- "I hope I am!" the girl chuckled.

- "I'm impressed you managed to convince Max to wear a helmet, we tried so many times but you, in one second you did it," Mike told.

- "Security is important, you can be safe and have fun."

- "I totally agree with you," Will added.

While they were watching their friends in the bowl, Will noticed that Jane was watching more the two girls than the boys, especially Max. He couldn't stop looking at her looking at Max.

After a moment, Beverly had a hard fall on the floor, dizzing the girl. They all ran to her, her body facing the ground. Jane crouched next to her and pressed her right index finger in her cheek.

- "Are you alive?" the girl asked.

- "Yes," the redhead chuckled. "I think I'm done for today."

- "Let's just sit and do nothing," Lucas told.

They helped Bev to stand and went near the rail. Jane, Will, Mike, and Dustin sat on it, Beverly lied down on the floor, Max was standing in front of Jane, and Lucas in front of the boys.

- "Your sister is working?" Max asked.

- "Yep, Friday is the day she finishes later than the other days," Jane explained.

- "Where is she working ?"

- "The week at the primary school, she gave music lessons and the week-end she is assistant with the disabled."

- "Oh really? It's awesome, and it's an hard work!"

- "Indeed," Jane smiled.

- "She must be good with kids," the redhead stated.

- "She is, she has always been. You were new here too, right? (Max nods) How was it for you?"

- "It could have been worse. It's mostly thanks to the basketball that I met new people especially Bev, and then the boys, why?"

- "Just wondering. You finish here because of your stepfather ?"

- "Yep, he wanted to be far from my father to begin a new life," Max sighed.

- "Do you miss him?"

- "Of course, but I don't think it would have been a good idea for me to stay with him, he is too much...in his world. What about yours?" Max asked, worried of the answer.

- "I've never met mine, he died before I could. My mom and he separated before I was born. He went in Paris with my sister but he didn't know my mom was pregnant of me."

- "Wait, you didn't grow up with your sister?" the redhead frowned.

- "Nope, not at the beginning. The first time I met her I was...eleven," Jane answered touching the top of her head.

- "Whoa, that's crazy!"

- "Yeah, kinda."

Their conversation had been cut by a group of teens surrounding them. It was Abigail and her friends cheerleaders and Football players. Beverly slowly stood to face them while Max and Lucas were on the defensive, looking in their eyes.

- "Hi losers," Abigail smirked.

- "What do you want!?" Max replied.

- "Punish the thief," Alban answered.

- "The thief? We didn't steal anything," Mike frowned.

Abigail and Alban shared an accomplice smile. The teenage boy rushed on Jane and raised her in the air before blocking her on the floor with his body. Her friends tried to help her, but the other Football players and cheerleaders grabbed them, stopping them from moving. Abigail began to walk in circle around Jane and Alban with a mischievous smile.

- "You think you can land your cute face in our town and have all the boys at your feet? I'm sorry to tell you, (crouches next to her and get closer to Jane's face) it doesn't work like that," Abigail explained.

- "Ruining my tee-shirt wasn't enough!? You're gonna beat me up!?"

Fifteen against seven!? So brave!" Jane replicated, struggling.

- "What? You're scared?" the girl mocked with a chuckle.

- "I won't give you this pleasure."

Abigail hadn't the time to answer that Jane grabbed Alban's jacket and hit his face with her head. The young boy rolled on his side, holding his face with his hands, allowing Jane to stand. A black-haired guy tried to punch. Jane parried the hit, grabbed his wrist and twisted his arm behind his back. She tackled him against the rail and twisted more his arm while he was screaming of pain. One of his friends wanted to help him and came from behind the girl. She heard him and, like a horse, kicked behind her right in his balls. The young boy bended and fell on the floor, his hands between his legs.

The other teens began to relax their hands around Jane's friends' arms, dazed by the change of the situation. Max freed herself and crushed her assailants' feet. The girl and the boy jumped on one of their legs, holding their foot like if it would stop the pain. The rest of the party followed the movement and had the advantage on the cheerleaders and Football players. A real fight began between the two sides.

Abigail, feeling the situation escaping her, grabbed Jane by her neck and threw her on the floor. Jane tried to stand, but Abigail kicked her in her ribs, multiple times. Even if Jane was feeling her stomach and chest burning, she was used to it and knew she could handle it. But she wasn't ready for the kick in the face. She fell on her back, stunned, seeing blurred and feeling a hot liquid flowing from her nose. Her ears were buzzing, and she was unable to see what was happening, but Abigail's shape, who was originally threatening her, began to run, followed by more shapes. Someone grabbed her arm and rolled her on her left side.

- "Are you okay?" the girl asked.

Jane, who was still stunned, nodded with difficulties because of the pain in her neck. She saw some blue lights a bit farther and understood that someone called the police. The girl forced her to sit and to take support on her body, like a chairback. Jane's vision began



to become more and more clear, seeing her friends with diverse wounds, talking with the police. She recognised the long red hair falling on her shoulder and knew the girl was Max and that she was in her arms. Her heart began to race and she didn't know if it was because of the stress or something else. Probably a mix of both. She wanted to move from her arms to not disrespect her, but her body was hurting too much, and she was feeling good with her, like if the pain was surmountable.

Max was holding tight Jane. Her body was shaking and her eyes seemed a bit lost, like if she didn't know where she was. She took off a tissue from her pocket and placed it under Jane's bloody nose. The other girl started before looking up at her with a small smile. The redhead loved her smile, she was doing her best to see it everytime she was with her. This smile was making her feel good, warm, and bubbly. Even stained with blood, it was still a beautiful smile.

- "Jane, you are karaté kid," Max whispered in her ear.

Jane lightly chuckled but wasn't sure she heard correctly what she said.

A policeman told them they called an ambulance to check them, even if Jane was telling them she was okay. But Max forced her to see the ambulance to check and threatened her to break more her nose if she was leaving before. The police officers didn't make a file, for them it was just a school quarrel. Even if Jane thought it was unfair, she was glad to not have a mark of this fight.

Each teens waited for one of their parents to take them back. When Jane's sister arrived, the young girl was looking down with her bandage on her nose.

- "Well, you seem okay," Constance stated.

- "You're not mad?" Jane frowned.

- "You don't get involved in fights easily, and I trust you. You are lucky they don't make a file."

- "I know. I'm sorry..."

- "It's fine, you're just going to be ugly for the next days," the blonde young woman joked.

Jane had a small chuckle and followed her sister, her left arm under her sister's and riding her bike with her right hand.

All the teens went back home, covered of bandages and exhausted by this brawl.

## 18. Trek

As it was the vacation, Jane and her sister went in the closest mountain to do trekking and mountain bike for three days. Jane was still hurt at her belly and her nose but less, allowing her to enjoy her trip. After four hours of an intense walking, they decided to take a break to drink and enjoy the landscape composed of hills and haze. Constance wrapped her arm around her little sister while she was drinking some water, and Jane placed her head on her sister's shoulder, breathing deeply the fresh air around.

- "Do you like your school?" Constance asked.

- "Yeah, it's cool, I think I made friends," Jane answered.

- "I saw, fighter friends."

- "I began the fight."

- "No, you just defended yourself and your friends. You didn't provoke the other teens, they came for this, they got what they were looking for."

- "I don't know, Abigail thinks I want to steal Troy from her."

Constance stifled a laugh.

- "It's not funny," Jane chuckled.

- "I'm sorry but I know no one gayer than you," her sister stated.

- "You are gayer than me !" the young girl told, hitting softly the taller girl's belly with her elbow.

- "Yeah maybe, I don't cry when a boy kiss me."

- "You are so rude. He is my friend."

- "I know, I told you that not everybody is homophobic."

- "I know. I'm still...not ready," Jane sighed.

- "You're scared, and it's understandable, but, don't stop loving because some people disagree with who you are, try to focus on those who love you like that because these people will stay with you all your life and not the others," Constance said.

- "I know, I know, I just don't want what happened to happen again...it's too hard," the young girl told with some tears growing in her eyes.

- "It won't."

- "You don't know that!"

- "That redhead seems tough."

Jane frowned and looked at her sister with an interrogative look while Constance was smirking.

- "How do you know?" Jane asked.

- "Oh please, the only person I know better than me, it's you."

- "I hate you."

- "I know, but let's act like if you were loving me," the big sister joked.

- "It's just a crush, it will pass. She is straight anyway, and I have other things to worry for now."

- "Yeah, mom."

- "I don't wanna go," confessed Jane confessed.

- "I know, it's hard, but the doctors said it's necessary for her."

- "But not for me!"

- "I know, I know. (walks in front of her and cups head her) Hey, don't focus on it, okay? You are on a break now, enjoy the mountain, the weather, the landscapes, and let me worry for the rest. I want you to relax for now, stressing you for something which is coming only

next week won't make it better," Constance softly said.

Jane nodded. They took back their stuff and continued their trek. Jane stayed quiet until the top of the mountain, but she managed to enjoy the moments with her sister. Jane put on a side of her head all her problems, Constance was right, she was on a break and she couldn't change anything here. She was glad to have a sister so understanding and never judging her for her choices. She was the family she needed now.

## 19. The sleepover

It was the vacation, but Will's mother was still working at the store. As he was bored and it was sunny, Will decided to join her in the middle of the day with some works to do. When he arrived, he had the surprise to see Jane behind the counter.

- "Hey Jane," the boy greeted with a smile and the end of a black eye he got at the skatepark.

- "Hey Will, what's up?"

- "Nothing special, just some works to do, and you?"

- "Same, I haven't begun yet," Jane sighed.

- "You work all day? You never take a break?"

- "I've already taken three days, my break is over."

- "Really? You went somewhere special or you stayed home?"

- "We went to the mountain with my sister, to do some trek and bike," Jane smiled.

- "God, you must be exhausted !" Will stated.

- "Not that much, we do this often, I'm used to it now."

- "I really don't understand people who do sport for fun," the young boy joked.

- "It's not you who are in a science club?"

- "A.V. club."

- "And it's not weird to do school task for fun?" the young girl mocked.

- "It's not tiring!"

- "It is! Thinking for hours to know how to...communicate with an

other country it's not tiring?"

- "No, it's fun," Will smiled.

- "Playing baseball is fun," Jane chuckled.

- "Oh my god, no!" the young boy laughed.

While the two were having fun, Joyce -placing the pens they received- was watching them with a smile. They had a good chemistry, she hoped he found a nice confidant. She knew her son, he was very shy and, even if he was really close to his friends, he was still very closed and not confident.

- "Mike do a sleepover tonight, you wanna come?" Will asked.

- "Um...I don't know, you're sure he wants me to come?"

- "Of course, he wants! He told us to ask you if we saw you."

- "Okay, my sister works tonight and tomorrow so, I think it's gonna be okay," Jane smiled.

Will's smile grew. He really liked Jane, it was hard to not like her, she was always nice, funny, and not judging anyone. She was a girl everybody could trust.

Jane was in front of a house. Will gave her Mike's address, but all the houses were looking like each other. It was not the kinds of districts where Jane and her sister could live, too expensive, but it was cute. She stayed a moment in front of the door, worried to meet his family. Maybe they wouldn't like her? Maybe Mike didn't want her to come and Will just asked her to come to embarrass her? Maybe it was a joke and they were going to mock her?

- "You think too much Jane," she grumbled to herself.

She finally found the courage to knock at the door. She heard footsteps approaching and a blonde woman opened to her.

- "Oh hi," the woman smiled. "I've never seen you before, what's your name?"

- "Jane," the young girl answered feeling more uncomfortable. "A...a friend of Mike."

- "Well, I'm Karen, his mother. Come in, (moves to let her in) Mike is in the basement with the others."

- "Thank you," Jane told with a shaking voice.

Jane slowly entered and took a look around. It was a nice house. She noticed some family pictures, Mike had apparently two sisters. She found the big one really pretty. His mother showed her the way to the stairs and smiled to her before letting her go down. When she arrived, they were all around Mike's arcade, with some bandages at their hands and some scratches on their faces, encouraging or yelling at him how to play.

- "Damn it!" Mike growled, kicking his machine. "Yeah MadMax, I know you have the best score!"

- "If you weren't this slow you could write Mikey instead!" Max stated.

- "I'm not slow! It's all strategy!"

- "Then, your strategy sucks!"

Jane had a amused smile and wanted to take support on the stairs' rail but it grinded and got everyone's attention.

- "Jane!" Dustin smiled, his arms raised to the sky.

- "Um, hi, I didn't want to interrupt."

- "You're not don't worry, we will have other argues like this all night," Lucas joked.

Jane had a relieved chuckle. They were happy to see her, and she felt immediately better. Mike invited her to sit with them on the couch or armchairs around the coffee table with guacamole, nachos, chips, small tomatoes, balls of mozzarella, and more things to eat. Jane sat on the couch, between Max and Dustin.



- "So, Lucas, how is it with Gabrielle?" Mike asked, his mouth full of nachos.

- "It's...complicated. How do you know if you are falling in love?"

- "Aw Lucas, you are falling in love!" Beverly stated with her mouth wide opened.

- "Lucas is in love," Dustin sang with a ridiculous dance.

- "Lucas is in love," Mike accompanied.

- "Come on, guys, how old are you !?" Max intervened with a frown.

- "Yeah sorry, so, what were you saying?" Dustin said, stopping his dance.

- "I was wondering how you know if you are falling in love or not."

Everyone in the room remained silent. They looked at each other like if he asked them the sense of the universe and how life began.

- "Well, um...it's something you feel inside, like, a heat, I guess, and butterflies in the stomach," Beverly explained.

- "Yeah, and when you feel good with this person, just by their presence," Mike added.

- "The heart racing too," Dustin continued.

While they were explaining, Max realised it was exactly what she had been feeling those last weeks but not with a boy. She looked at her friend on her right. Jane seemed to be in deep thoughts, not really listening to the others, but she didn't care right now. All she noted was...the butterflies in her stomach, her heart racing, and the heat in her body.

- "The desire to kiss," Will intervened.

Exactly. It was exactly what Max wanted to do right now with Jane. But why? She had never felt like this with a girl before, it was not logical. It would pass, it was certainly her post-period hormones

which were making her feeling weird.

- "Max," Beverly whispered, sitting on an armchair on her left. "Is everything okay?"

- "Um, yeah, why?" the redhead asked, worried she could had read her mind.

- "Just wondering, you were...zoning."

- "I'm fine, don't worry," Max reassured with a smile.

Was she? She didn't know. And she didn't know neither how to understand those feelings. She didn't know if it was normal to feel this for a friend, a friend she had known for just a few weeks. It didn't make sense, and she thought it was stupid, the atmosphere and the conversation disturbed her, it was all.

- "Did we help you?" Dustin asked.

- "I don't know, I like her, I kinda feel what you describe but...I don't know if it's reciproqual," Lucas confessed.

- "Invite her for a date, you will be fixed," Beverly said.

- "Yeah, I can try I guess," the young boy shrugged.

- "Jane, have you ever fallen in love?" Bev asked.

Jane, who was lost in her mind, wide opened her eyes in direction of the floor, not really wanting to answer this.

- "Um...yeah."

- "Are you still together?" Lucas told.

- "No..."

- "Oh...what happened?" Dustin said.

- "Things...I, I would prefer not talking about it, if it's okay..."

- "Sure, sorry, we are just curious," Beverly reassured with a warm

smile.

- "I understand, it's okay," Jane weakly smiled.

- "Okay, enough talk for tonight, let's watch a movie," Mike proposed.

The teens agreed. They installed the couch and the armchairs behind the table, to face the TV, before going in a debate to choose the movie. It was a big fight between Indiana Jones and Terminator, but Indiana Jones won, even if Beverly insisted a lot for Terminator.

- "Next time," Will softly told to the redhead.

Beverly pouted in defeat and sat on the couch, next to Max. They watched the movie with Bev, Mike, and Dustin's commentaries every second before installing their mattresses and falling asleep.

## 20. The essay

- "Before the vacation, I asked you to write an essay about your dream job," Mr. Johnson began.

The party and Jane were in psychology class, scattered a bit everywhere in the room. Jane was near the window with Mike in front of her and Will behind her. Max was two rows on their right, at the back of the class, Beverly in front of her, Lucas at her left, and Dustin in front of him. The teacher walked between the teens, giving them their papers and discovering their marks with commentaries. When Mike had his paper, he turned to watch Jane. The girl was frowning while she was reading, she seemed angry, like very angry.

- "Are you okay?" Mike frowned.

Jane didn't answer. She was clenching her jaw and closing her fists of anger. She thought she was going to explode. She turned to her teacher, who was still giving back the works, and killed him with his eyes.

- "Is there a problem, Miss Brown?" the man asked.

- "Are you really asking!? How can you write « funny » and « stupid » to someone's work!? What's wrong with you!?"

- "You should lower your dream, it's a bit too much for you."

- "Too much for me!? (stands) Why is it too much for me!?"

- "Because... (shows her with his hand)"

- "Because what!? Because I'm a girl!? That's what you mean!?" Jane got worked up.

- "In policeman there is the word « man », " Mr. Johnson firmly stated.

- "Put a « wo » inside and it becomes policewoman! What's the deal with that!? You don't think a girl can be a cop!? Only because I have a pair of boobs and not a pair of balls!? I've been training everyday for years now to become a cop! Who are you to tell people their

dreams are bullshits and stupid only because you're an asshole!?"

The class stayed dazed. Jane was usually quiet but now she was furious!

- "What is she doing?" Mike murmured to Will.

- "She is standing for herself," the other boy smiled.

Will was proud of her and proud to be her friend.

- "For someone who wants to be a cop, you don't have lots of cold blood."

- "I have cold blood! I had so many times cold blood that you are paying for the other dick heads!"

- "Miss Brown!" the teacher got angry. "Leave my class, and go to the headmaster!"

Jane stared at him, her eyes full of anger and the smoke leaving her dilated nostrils. She put her stuff in her khaki bag and went in direction of the door before stopping and facing the man again.

- "I hope, one day, when I am a cop, you will need my help, that I'll have to save you and you will understand how wrong you were about me!" the girl said before leaving the class by slamming the door.

Max didn't realise how big her smile was and how red her cheeks were. Even if she was denying it, she had this small feeling inside her, burning and ready to show up.

Jane waited in the headmaster's office for her sister to come. She was working and couldn't always free herself when she wanted. After an hour, the blonde head finally arrived. She saluted the headmaster and the teacher before sitting next to her little sister.

- "Do you know why we are here?" the headmaster asked.

- "Barely," Constance answered.

- "Your sister showed a deep disrespect to her teacher by insulting

him and humiliating him (Jane rolls her eyes) in front of his class," the man explained behind his desk.

- "Liar," Jane mumbled in a murmur.

- "I'm sorry, did you say something?"

- "I said : liar. It's not what happened."

- "That's not what he said."

- "Maybe," Constance intervened, "maybe we could hear her version?"

The headmaster leaned back in his chair, crossing his arms.

- "Fine."

- "Um...Mr. Johnson gave us back our works about our dream job. He wrote on it things like « it's stupid » or « you're really funny » and...I didn't really appreciate it and told him..."

- "You called me a dickhead," the teacher stated.

- "I...I know, I've used some bad words, but it's only because YOU disrespected me too by implying that I could not be a cop because I'm a fragile and weak girl!"

- "Because it's ridiculous!"

- "We are not in the fifties anymore! Girls can become cops and boys can be nurses!"

- "Enough!" the headmaster intervened.

Jane crossed her arms and looked down of anger while the teacher sat again in his chair.

- "We don't tolerate such behavior within this establishment, is it clear?" the man told. "And we hope you will remedy that," the headmaster finished, talking to Constance this time.

- "I, I don't think I have something to remedy," the big sister frowned like if she was thinking. "I mean, how a teacher can ask for respect

when even him doesn't have some for his students? It's hypocritical. I won't tell her anything because I know you won't tell him (shows the teacher with her thumb) anything. And plus, you probably punished her, (turns to Jane) what do you have to do?"

- "Three hours of detention."

- "It's enough. I won't blame her for telling the truth, I'll just talk to her for the way she said it. That's all I can do."

- "Are you kidding me!?" Mr. Johnson got angry, now standing.

- "Okay, okay, if you insist!"

Constance turned to her sister, placed her hands on her waist and had a fake angry frown.

- "Don't have dreams Jane, it's bad, it will give you hope and make you happy. Don't be happy. And let people taking you down, it's better, don't fight for yourself, okay?" Constance sarcastically said.

Jane had an amused and relieved smile to her sister. It was always comforting to have someone who was always on your side, no matter what.

- "Is it over?" Constance told.

The principal and the teacher stayed dazed. Constance stood, followed by Jane, and left the office.

- "I'm sorry for this, I didn't want to bother you at your work..." Jane apologized.

- "It's fine, Robin replaces me, but, be careful Jane, I don't want you to have problems with school authorities, you can't stand up in front of everyone, there are consequences and you need to think about them before it's too late."

- "I know...I'm sorry, I think it's because of this week-end..."

- "Yeah, I understand, but people don't care about your personal problems. Next time, take a breath, this guy is just a teacher, this

essay you wrote won't have any impact of your futur life, but your behavior towards him can become a real problem, do you understand?" Constance explained with a calm tone.

- "Yes," Jane nodded.

- "You should apologize, even if it's not sincere and totally unfair, you should, to be sure he won't write bad things in your record."

- "Okay," the young girl sighed.

Constance smiled and kissed her sister's head before going back to work. Jane followed her sister's advice and went to Mr. Johnson to apologize. The man accepted them and told the headmaster to forget about this story. Jane went back in class, more motivated than ever to become a cop.



## 21. Mechanics

Jane went back in class after her quarrel with her teacher. She was in mechanics, and she sat with Lucas, who was looking at her with big eyes.

- "What?" Jane frowned.
- "Nothing, it was not expected, that's all," Lucas shrugged.
- "Yeah, I wasn't expecting that too."
- "It was cool, Mr. Johnson is backward, I don't understand how you can teach psychology with such a scrumpy mind!"
- "Me neither."
- "Max and Bev had already had problems with him," Lucas told.
- "Really? What happened?" Jane asked with a curious tone.
- "Well, you know them, they are not really into girly things, and they don't have their tongues in their pockets. One day, I don't really remember the origin of the debate, but he told them that stupid girls shouldn't be allowed to do skateboard, that it was a shame for the professionals."
- "What!? Is it a joke!? What an asshole!" the girl got worked up.
- "That's exactly what Bev told him, she yelled in the corridor : « You are an asshole! You can't treat people like that! Go fuck yourself! » and then, Max spat on him."
- "She what!?" Jane exclaimed with wide opened eyes and a big smile.
- "She spat on him," Lucas repeated with a smile.

Jane laughed out loud in the class, imagining the scene. Lucas wrapped his arm around her to cover her mouth. The girl managed to calm down before the teacher could tell her anything.

- "Be careful or you will go back to the headmaster," Lucas chuckled.

- "Oh please no, I just got out!"

When the teacher finished to explain the theory, the teens were doing some practices. Lucas and Jane went to a car and had to diagnose what was wrong with the engine. After eight false propositions, they finally got the right answer, allowing them to leave the class. A black-haired girl was waiting in front of the door.

- "Wow," whispered Jane whispered, hoping that Lucas didn't hear her.

Lucas frowned with a smirk. He heard Jane and noticed she was looking at the girl with insistance.

- "It's Gabrielle," the young boy told.

- "Oh, okay, she is..."

- "Pretty, right?"

- "I, I guess," Jane stuttered, concentrating to not blush.

She approached them with a smile which didn't let Jane indifferent.

- "Hey Gab," Lucas greeted.

- "Hey Sinclair, you are ready?" Gabrielle asked.

- "More than ever," the boy smiled.

Jane watched them interacting like if she wasn't here. After a moment, Lucas noticed that Gabrielle was always looking next to him.

- "Oh, sorry," Lucas pouted, "Gabrielle, this is Jane, Jane, this is Gabrielle."

- "Nice to meet you," Gabrielle smiled, shaking Jane's hand.

- "Yeah, me too. I, I, I'll let you alone, good luck. No, I mean, good...day, yeah, have a good day," Jane clumsily said. "I should go,

bye."

Jane quickly walked away from them. Lucas was smiling while Gabrielle was frowning.

- "Is she okay?" Gabrielle asked with a concerned tone.

- "Yes, she is fine. I think she likes you."

- "Oh, cool, at least one of your friends likes me."

- "The others will like you too, believe me," Lucas reassured.

Lucas offered his arm to his friend, who accepted it with pleasure. Lucas had the courage to invite her for spending more time together after school, and now, they were going to the mall to eat something and walking between the shops.

Jane, as for her, was in direction of the store. She couldn't believe her right now, stupid hormones. Why was she attracted to every girls around!? She didn't know. She thought it was because her last relation ended two years ago, but it was on purpose that she didn't want another one, it was too soon, she was not ready. Her mind wasn't ready. But, maybe her body was. She needed to figure it out before she transformed herself in a giant tomato. But she had other problems for now.

## 22. The crushes

Will was with Jane and Max, in direction of the field for athleticism. He was definitely not missing sport and hoped to not do a group sport. Last time with Troy was embarrassing enough, he didn't want to live that again.

The friends separated, as usual, to go to their respective changing rooms. While they were changing, Max couldn't help but watch Jane changing her tee-shirt. She quickly looked away when she felt the heat growing in her cheeks and didn't want the others to notice. Maybe it was just attraction, nothing more, not love. She looked at the other girls. She found them pretty and quite interesting, but she wasn't feeling the butterflies in her stomach or her face burning like with Jane. She turned again to her friend and noticed she was really quiet and seemed concerned.

- "Hey, is everything okay?" Max softly asked.

- "Yeah, yeah, I'll be better next week," Jane answered, looking at her tee-shirt she was putting.

- "If you need to talk, I'm here."

- "I'm fine, I'm fine, just...complicated things, that's all."

- "You're sure you're okay? You're a bit pale," Max stated, caressing her cheek.

Jane slowly looked at Max, feeling her heart racing and her breathing accelerating. The two girls stared a moment without moving or talking. Like if there were no one around. Alone.

Max understood what she was feeling but didn't know what to do or to tell. Maybe Jane wasn't interesting in her, but she had this feeling inside her telling her the contrary. She could see it in her eyes.

- "Let's go girls!" their teacher yelled from outside.

The two girls started and quickly broke the eyes contact. They finished to get ready and went directly on the field, joining Will.

Today, it was the one hundred meters. Max and Jane were sitting on the floor, watching the others doing their races.

- "Your lace is untied," Max told.

- "Oh, thanks," Jane answered, leaning to her shoe.

- "Is it bad?"

- "What?" Jane asked with a shaking voice.

- "What stresses you."

- "Oh...um, it's...personal..."

- "Yeah, okay, sorry, I didn't want to be intrusive...I'm just worried, I guess."

- "Don't, it's not the first time. It's hard...emotionnally, that's all."

- "I'm sorry..." the redhead apologized.

- "Don't be, you can't do anything and me neither," Jane reassured.

- "Are you sick or something like that?"

- "No, no, I'm okay," Jane softly smiled.

They stopped talking because it was Will's turn on the race. Max was glad it didn't become weird between them, she didn't want to lose her.

Jane was wondering what happened while they were changing. When Max touched her, she couldn't hide her excitement, and maybe Max saw it and understood she was lesbian. She hoped she wouldn't tell anyone, she didn't need to live that again.

The race ended and Will arrived at the last position, out of breath. Troy crouched next to Jane, under the killing eyes of Max.

- "You know what's Will's problem?" Troy began.

- "Be careful of what you're going to say," Max threatened.

- "He ran on his heels instead of his soles of his feet."
- "Why don't you tell him?" Jane asked.
- "You know why...he would think I would mock him."
- "I wonder why!" Max sarcastically said.

Jane had a small chuckle and gave a small tap to Max to tell her to calm down.

- "Yeah, I'm sorry about that..." Troy told, looking down.
- "Don't apologize to us but to him and the others," the redhead snapped.
- "Well, I know a girl who has a pair of boobs and a pair of balls."
- "Oh fuck, you heard about it?" Jane chuckled.
- "Everybody had! It's awesome! Like when you spat (points at Max) on him, it was awesome too!"
- "Why are you nice with me!?" Max frowned, on the defensive.
- "I, I, I, I don't know...I should go, I don't want to scare Will."

Troy stood and walked away with a smile for Jane. Max didn't like how she was looking at him, there was too much...love, she wanted her to look at her instead of him.

- "Do you suck his dick to make him feel better!?" Max replied with a sharp tone.
- "Max! It's gross! He was trying to be nice and you rejected him like a garbage!"
- "But he is a garbage, it's too late to be nice now!"
- "It's never too late to change! I don't ask you to be friend with him but—"
- "I hope not! He is a cunt," Max angrily cut.

- "He is changing," Jane stated with an irritated tone.

- "I don't care! See, be friend with him if you want, but I won't be nice just because he has a crush on you and is nice just for you."

- "I...he...no, he doesn't have a crush on me!"

- "Then, you are the blindest person ever! I'm glad he is changing, but when you tell him you're not interested, do you think he will still be nice with me!?"

Jane found nothing to answer. First, because she didn't know why Max was yelling at her, and second, because she thought she was clear with Troy. Maybe she was right, Troy was nice just to flirt with her, but, he had no chance with her, even if he didn't know. Maybe she should stop everything while it was time. Or maybe Max was paranoid, and Troy didn't have a crush on her.

At the end of the class, Jane didn't change. She joined Mike who proposed her to walk with her to the store.

- "Who is your celebrity crush?" the boy asked.

- "Lady Di," Jane answered without hesitation.

- "Oh, nice one!"

- "You?"

- "Michel Pfeiffer."

- "Hmm, Scarface, good choice."

The two friends kept walking in silence. Jane was still disturbed by Max's behavior earlier, and couldn't think it was because she understood she was lesbian and that she didn't like it. Like, she was homophobic and was totally against it.

- "Hey, you're okay?" Mike frowned with a concerned tone.

- "What? Oh, yeah, yeah, sorry...Do you...do you think Max and the others, would have a problem with me?" Jane asked with a small

voice.

- "A problem with you? About what?"
- "Come on Mike, try to follow a bit."
- "Oh ! About...this. Um, I don't think so, why?"
- "Dunno, just wondering," Jane told, fidgeting.
- "Hey, someone told you something?" Mike asked.
- "No, no, Max was angry in sport, I thought it was because of it..."
- "Don't worry. Max can have a bad temper, but she is probably one of the most tolerant persons I know," the young boy reassured.
- "Yeah...if you say so..."



## 23. The kiss

Max was feeling bad for her behavior toward Jane the day before. She didn't know why she was so angry at her and Troy talking, she already knew they were friends but yesterday it was too much. The hormones again, probably. But today, she was going to apologize, Jane didn't deserve to be victim of her stupid crush. She arrived in the changing room and noticed that Jane was already here by seeing her jacket and khaki backpack. She quickly changed and went directly to the field without waiting for Bev. Jane was pacing with her headphone but with worried eyes. The redhead approached, but the other girl hadn't noticed her. She tapped her shoulder which made her start.

- "Oh, sorry, I didn't want to scare you," Max pouted.

- "It's fine, don't worry," Jane said.

- "I, I'm sorry too for...yesterday, I don't know why I was so angry, sorry..."

- "Okay, um...thank you."

- "You're stressing for...your personal thing?"

- "Oh, yeah, it's tomorrow and...it's like the time is too slow and too fast at the same time," Jane sighed.

- "Wow, you're really fearing it," Max stated.

Jane nodded and looked down. She was feeling the tears coming but didn't want to cry in front of her.

- "Your sister didn't have problem with Neil?" the redhead asked, wanting to change the subject.

- "No," Jane sniffed, quickly wiping a tear. "She saw him while she was buying food, but he didn't say anything."

- "Cool, he can go too far sometimes, I wanted to be sure."

- "Yeah, I don't want to be rude, but he should be the one to worry."

- "You're not rude, I thought exactly the same thing during their quarrel," Max chuckled.

Jane giggled which warmed Max's heart. The other girls arrived and the training began. Even if Max managed to change Jane's mind, the girl couldn't stop thinking of the next day. It was felt on her way to play, she was missing all the passes, all the shoots, she was not listening to the instructions the coach was giving, and she was a bit flabby. Max and Beverly tried everything to cheer her up but in vain, Jane was still preoccupied. The coach was really mad and asked Jane to stay a bit after the training. All the girls left the field to change, all wondering what was wrong with Jane.

- "You don't come?" Beverly asked, ready to go.

- "I, I'm gonna wait for her, if you don't mind," Max answered.

- "Okay, I see you on Monday."

Max nodded and waited, her bag on her back, ready to go. She wanted to see Jane before leaving, it was stronger than her, she wanted to spend time with her, and she wanted to talk to her about those weird sensations toward her.

Jane entered the changing room with an angry face and began to change quickly.

- "You okay? What happened?" Max frowned.

- "I'm a burden for the team, my personal problems shouldn't be everyone's problems and more shit like this!" Jane angrily explained.

- "What!? Is it a joke!? Just because you were not in the mood today!?"

- "Exactly! This woman hates me since the beginning anyway! And now I'm gonna be late!"

- "Hey (grabbs her shoulders) calm down. How do you know she hates you?"

- "I know when someone hates me, I can see it on their face."
- "Really? It's cool, me I know they hate me because...everybody does."
- "I don't hate you," said Jane said.
- "Yeah, you are one of the rare people who tolerate me. But I'm not stupid, I can be rude, I'm loud, and when I have to say something, I just say it. Not everybody likes it," Max stated.
- "I do. At least you're not hypocritical, I like it. Not like this bitch!"

Jane liked her. That was all she heard. Her heart was going to explode, in a pulsion, she gently put her hands on Jane's cheeks and placed her lips on the other girl's. The butterflies in her stomach were in a hurricane. Jane's lips were soft, and she had the feeling that Jane was kissing back. The door of the changing room opening brutally surprised the two girls. In the panic, Max pushed Jane who hit the wall behind her, and put her hands on her mouth like if she just did something bad.

Jane was breathing heavily with her nose. She wasn't expecting this from Max and would have enjoyed it if the coach hadn't arose in the room without warning. She knew she was in trouble by the way she was looking at her.

- "You, you wait for me in the boys' room," the woman angrily ordered.

Jane didn't wait a second and clumsily grabbed her stuff before running outside. Max was still turning her back to the door and didn't know what her coach was going to tell her. The woman approached and placed an hand on the young girl's shoulder.

- "I won't tell anyone, she shouldn't have done this, I knew something was wrong with her."

Max stayed dazed. She found nothing to answer, still shocked by what she just did. She left the room, still thinking of this kiss, of the bubbling feelings, the soft lips, confirming her feelings for Jane.

## 24. The worst day

Jane was in the car with her sister. She was living one of the worst days of her life and what happened the day before was not helping. She was still not understanding this change of mood from Max.

- "You didn't sleep because of today or because of yesterday?" Constance asked.

- "Both," Jane answered.

- "You want to—"

- "No."

Constance pouted. She knew her sister, she would be in a bad mood anyway, no matter what happened the day before.

- "We will stay just a few hours."

- "I know," Jane said with irritation.

- "It's the only way for her to go outside."

- "I know," the young girl continued, clenching her jaw.

- "It's good for her."

- "I KNOW !" Jane yelled, tensing her hands and her face becoming red of anger. "You don't think I don't know why we are doing this for years now!? You think I'm stupid!? You never thought I was just done to do this for nothing!? And don't tell me it's not for nothing because IT IS!"

Constance brutally turned the steering wheel and braked next to the road, propulsing her little sister forward, held by her seatbelt which cut her breathing. The blonde teen put off the belt and turned to her sister.

- "Look, I thought you were like this because you were disturbed about having feelings for another girl after two years...No! You shut

up and you listen to me! You've been awful for days because you don't want to spend a few hours with our mother, the person who raised you, educated you, and loved you!" Constance angrily told. "And I'm sure she still loves you."

- "She doesn't know who I am! And she didn't educate me, she let me between Martin's hands! This asshole!"

- "It doesn't mean she didn't love you! She had been abused and manipulated by this man, just like you! You can understand this better than anyone!"

- "She is my mother, she is supposed to protect me not to hurt me!" Jane stated with wrath. "I'm weak because she is weak! I should have been with you and dad instead of her and Martin...I don't understand why I should help her whereas she never helped me..." Jane confessed, calmer but with tears falling.

- "Because you love her."

- "OF COURSE I LOVE HER! She is my mom..."

- "Okay, (Constance cups her head and wipes her tears with her thumbs) you are angry and sad, I can understand. We have two more hours, you should try to sleep," Constance softly said.

Jane nodded. They put back their seat belts and went back to the road. Constance was right, Jane loved her mother, and she wasn't this bad with her, she just made a mistake when she married Mr. Brenner, but she always showed her support and love like any mothers. She was not mad at her mother, it wasn't her fault, but she was mad at herself for not handling the situation. Jane managed to fall asleep for the last hours of their travel, before arriving in front of the clinic. They entered the building and the decoration inside was a mix between an hotel and an hospital.

- "We are here for Terry Ives," Constance said.

- "Yes, you are her daughters," the nurse smiled. "Follow me."

The two girls walked in the corridor, behind the man showing them the way. He explained them that she was excited everytime they

were telling her she had a visit today.

- "How many times did you tell her we were coming?" Jane asked with a bitter tone.

- "Two or three times."

- "And she forgot everytime?"

- "You know—"

- "Yeah, I know."

Constance gave her a tap to tell her to stop. Jane raised her hands to apologize. She wanted to make an effort but some things were stronger than her. When they entered the room, they saw their mother in her clothes and holding her bag, waiting, with other medical staff next to her. The man knocked at the open door, getting everyone's attention.

- "Hi Ms. Ives, how are you today?" the nurse smiled, guided them.

- "I'm fine, I have guests today," the woman answered.

- "I know, they are just here."

Constance and Jane shyly entered the room with a small smile. The mother stood and held out her hand in their direction to greet them.

- "Hi, um...said the mother with a frown like if she was thinking. Um..."

- "Constance?"

- "Yes! They just told me, it's stupid, chuckled Terry. (Turns to Jane and shakes her hand) And you?"

- "Jane," the young girl gulped with difficulties.

- "Jane, welcome."

Once they all saluted each other, Terry followed her two daughters to their car. Three nurses were following them, just in case something

would happen. They walked in the town nearabout before finishing at McDonalds, Jane's favorite fast food. They sat at a table with their burgers, the two sisters facing their mother.

- "So, how is life?" Constance asked.

- "It's okay, I went on a cruise, we sailed in the Caribbean during an entire week, it was beautiful!" the mother answered with a smile.

Jane frowned and watched her sister with an interrogative look.

- "It's a trip we made when I was five," the blonde girl murmured. "Who was with you?"

- "Oh, I don't remember the names, I met a lot of people."

- "It's cool," Constance sadly smiled.

They spent majority of the meal in silence. Constance tried many times to begin a conversation, but Terry wasn't always receptive and it was desperating the young woman.

- "Do you know who we are?" Jane asked.

- "Constance (points at the blonde head) and Jane (points at the young girl), right?"

- "Yes, it's us," Constance told.

- "Who are we for you?" Jane insisted. "Terry, who are we for you?"

- "Jane and Constance."

- "But what kind of relation do we have? What do we represent for you?"

- "Friends. You are my friends," the woman frowned like if it was obvious.

- "Friends? Just friends?"

- "Yes, we are friends, why do you ask this?"

- "For nothing..."

Jane preferred looking away. She felt her heart tensing and tears coming in her eyes. She was feeling sick and was unable to talk to her more, she knew it was useless.

- "Why do you look sad?" her mother asked.

- "'Cause I am," Jane sniffed with some tears falling.

- "Aw, why?"

- "I, I miss my mom."

- "Where is she?"

- "She is...she left..."

- "She will come back," the woman assured.

- "No, she won't," Jane affirmed, nibbling her thumb to hold her tears.

- "She is dead?"

- "I would have preferred..."

After this conversation, Jane stopped talking. She just waited for this to end. Her sister kept talking with her, and she was glad she did because their mother seemed happy to talk to someone who wasn't a doctor or a nurse.

They said goodbye to her, Jane quickly left while Constance was finishing some papers and other things. When the big sister walked to her car, she found her little sister taking support on it with her hands, looking down to cry.

- "She, she will never know who we are...we are just her friends... (sniffs) I, I miss her, I miss her so much, and I love her but I can't tell her because she doesn't know who I am! (sniffs) My own mother doesn't know who I am! This is not fair! I won't, I won't hear her again telling me she loves me, (cries) I want my mom to hug me and to tell me that everything will be okay, (sniffs) I need her...I miss her



so much..." Jane said with a mix of sadness and anger.

Jane's throat became tighter, not allowing any more words to go out. Constance hugged her from behind with some tears falling.

- "She spent a good day, she was really happy to see us, you should focus on that," Constance told with emotion in her voice.

- "But she won't remember, it was useless," Jane cried.

- "I know..."

Constance kissed her sister's head before telling her to go in the car. They went back to Hawkins, Jane's worst day was now over.

## 25. Tension

When Jane entered the school, it was like if everybody knew what happened on Saturday. She was feeling the looks on her and hearing the murmurs. But she didn't know how everyone could know, her coach told her she wouldn't tell anyone to not have a bad reputation. She was just paranoid. She shook her head and walked to her locker. She was going to her first class when she saw Troy to his locker, and decided to salute him.

- "Hey Troy," the girl greeted.

The young boy didn't answer. He kept taking his books with an angry face.

- "Troy? You good? What's wrong?"

This time, he slammed his locker and turned to her with killing eyes. Jane began to worry of what was going to happen.

- "You are a dyke!?" the boy angrily murmured, getting closer to her.

- "What?... (looks around) How...how..."

- "How do I know!? My step-mother saw you kissing another girl! I understand better why you're friend with the Queer now!"

- "The coach is your step-mother," Jane stated in a shocked sigh.

- "Yes, she told me to stay far from you because of your damn disease!"

- "Disease..."

- "Yeah, stay away from me!"

- "Wait! (grabbs his arm) Don't tell anyone, please," Jane begged.

- "Who do you think I am!? I won't tell anyone that I was trying to seduce a dyke!"

He brutally freed himself and left Jane dazed in the hall. She wanted to cry and scream at the same time but did nothing. She went to History class like if nothing happened. She really hoped Troy would stay quiet about this story, but she was fearing English class now, he was her only friend for this period. She went in the class, her headphone on her ears, without looking at the other students, going directly to her seat at the back of the class, next to the window.

Max watched her walking while her friends were calling her, but she ignored them. She was so mad at herself now, she ruined everything with Jane and embarrassed her because of her stupid hormones. She didn't know how she was going to repair this, but she had to do it fast, everyone was going to suspect something between the two girls.

- "What's wrong with her?" Mike frowned, looking at Jane watching outside and nibbling her thumb.

- "She seems stressed," Beverly stated. "She is shaking."

- "She had a personal thing this weekend which was stressing her a lot, it's probably this," Max intervened, hoping it was the only thing.

The others nodded without asking more. The class began, and it was as usual : boring. The bell ringing woke up the entire class who needed a minute to know where they were. Jane left the class as fast as possible, not wanting to talk to the others, especially Max. Now she had English, and she didn't know if Troy would let her sitting next to him. She approached him slowly, but the boy was ignoring her.

- "You want me to sit somewhere else?" Jane shyly asked.

- "I don't care," Troy mumbled with a shrug.

Jane hesitated but sat next to him, keeping a safe distance with him. The rest of the class spent in a cold and uncomfortable silence between the two teens and Jane knew it was just the beginning.

Max spent the day looking for Jane, but the girl was avoiding them. She didn't eat at the cafeteria and, when she had class with them, she was walking away before everyone. But now, she had sport with her,

and she couldn't run away from her again. She asked Will to go without her while she was talking to Jane. She grabbed the other girl's arm to get her attention and noticed she wasn't wearing the leather bracelet she bought her.

- "Can you stop running!?" the redhead angrily told. "I tried to talk to you all day!"

- "Oh yeah!? You wanna talk now!? You had no rights to do this! You hear me!? You can't kiss someone without asking! What's the next step, you're going to rape me!?"

- "What the hell, no!"

- "We are not in a stupid movie! There is no path with rose petals or a stupid music at every kiss or whatever! You didn't care of what I could feel!" Jane stated with wrath.

- "That's not true ! I just thought—"

- "You just thought what!? That everyone wants to be kissed by you!? That's what you thought!?"

- "No. Nevermind, it was a mistake, you're such a cunt, I can't believe I wanted to kiss you!" Max got worked up.

The two stared angrily at each other before going to the changing room. They changed at the extrem opposite and went on the field without looking at each other. Max was standing next to Will with her arms crossed.

- "Is everything okay with Jane?" the young boy asked with a concerned tone.

- "No, she is a dick."

Will didn't insist. He wasn't understanding how two friends could hate each other the next week with no related reason.

All the teens were all distributed in their teams, Will with Max and Jane in the other team. It was Max's turn at the bat, and Jane was the thrower. The redhead wasn't surprised to receive fast and crooked

balls she couldn't hit. Max couldn't believe her, so it was how Jane would be now? She couldn't accept that and approached her with her bat on her shoulder.

- "So now you're gonna be a bully!?" Max provoked.

Jane dropped the ball on the floor and quickly walked to Max, her face close to hers.

- "You have no idea what a bully can do," Jane told gritting her teeth and in a low voice.

Max had a weird shiver. Did she just threaten her? No, it didn't sound like that. She seemed more...scared. Jane was scared, not mad, and Max felt stupid for not understanding it before.

- "By the way, do you know who is Troy's step-mother?" Jane rhetorically asked before going back to her base.

Troy knew. Max thought Jane was reacting like that because she wasn't gay and was maybe a bit against this but no. She was feeling more guilty now, she had no idea that Jane was actually lesbian and probably had problems with this before.

## 26. Last training

The atmosphere between the party and Jane for the rest of the week didn't become warmer. She kept avoiding them and was ignoring their questions to her. Now it was Saturday, and the two redheads were arriving at their basket-ball training. Max was a bit disappointed to not see Jane's stuff in the changing room while Beverly was surprised.

- "She is probably late," Bev told.

- "Yeah, probably..."

They changed and went on the field, waiting for everyone. After a moment, the coach began her speech while Jane was still not here.

- "Wait, Jane is late," Beverly intervened.

- "No," the coach answered. "I asked her to not come back."

The girls all gasped of surprise while Max was feeling worse than before. It was all her fault.

- "Why? Because she is not very good?" Jenifer asked.

- "No. Last week I've surprised her...kissing another girl."

- "I knew it!" Bev stated with a smile.

- "You knew what?" Clara frowned.

- "That Jane was lesbian," the redhead answered like if it was obvious.

- "Jane is a dyke!?" Jenifer said with a disgust face.

- "I prefer saying lesbian, but I guess it works too. Don't tell me no one noticed? (all shake their heads to say no) When you showed us your new bra, she didn't become red because she is prude."

- "Oh my god! That's disgusting, she watched us changing! She was

probably enjoying it whereas we didn't know!" Jenifer told with terror in her voice.

- "Oh come on! She always arrived first, and she kinda ran to be the first out! She is not like that!"

- "And with Clara!? She watched her boobs!"

- "I asked her to do it..." Clara intervened.

- "And you don't care that she could have enjoyed it!?"

- "No, she didn't want to, I...forced her a bit."

- "You didn't force her! And by respect for you, she shouldn't have to!"

- "I was going to insist anyway!"

- "Yeah, she just wanted to get rid of it," Beverly added. "And watching is not that bad, I mean, none of you watch the boys when they are shirtless?"

- "But it's normal, and the boys want to be watched, we, we never wanted her to watch us!" Jenifer continued.

- "So you agree with the coach!?"

- "Of course!"

- "How can you agree with discrimination!?"

- "You don't know what she...does when she watches us, maybe she...touches herself on us in underwears!"

- "She does what she wants! You spent your middle school touching yourself on Alban's pictures!"

- "God Bev! Are you gay or what!?"

- "No, I'm not, but even if I was, it shouldn't be a problem! Jane is my friend, and I refuse to let people bother her for being in love with a girl!" Beverly got angry.

The coach whistled to stop the conversation while all the girls were covering their ears.

- "Jane is gone, that's all, now go running!" the woman ordered.

The girls obeyed, keeping debating.

- "Do you agree with that?" Beverly asked while running.

- "Of course not!" Max answered.

- "Why didn't you defend her?"

- "You were doing it right, you didn't need my help."

- "If Jenifer decides to bother Jane at school, are you going to defend her?"

- "What!? Jenifer won't, she is not like that."

- "I thought she was not homophobic, but I was wrong."

- "I hope I'm not..."

Beverly and Max kept running without talking about it. In fact, they didn't talk at all during the training, Beverly too pissed and Max too lost. It was the end of the last exercise, and the girls went to the changing room, except Max who wanted to talk to the coach.

- "I thought you weren't supposed to tell anyone," Max stated with disappointment.

- "They have the right to know what kind of person is Jane. What she did to you is not fair, not normal and disgusting, but don't worry, nobody knows it was you the other girl."

- "Not even Troy?"

- "No, I just said a girl. Now leave," the coach ordered.

Max angrily walked to the changing room, shaking her head in disbelief. Jane did nothing wrong, but the coach and the girls were thinking the contrary, now all the school was going to know. Beverly



was still there, waiting for her friend.

- "Don't wait for me next week, I won't come back," Max told, changing her tee-shirt.

- "Good, I was going to say the same thing," Beverly answered.

- "Great."

- "Great. I can't believe the girls right now!"

- "They are all hating Jane?"

- "I hope not, but it's not them who scare me the most..."

- "The cheerleaders and the football players," Max stated.

- "Yep, I'm worried, they are not very...tender," Bev said.

Max nodded. She was fearing the next week. Jenifer was the kind of person to share those type of gossip and wouldn't miss the opportunity to have all the lights on her. Jane was going to hate her more now.

## 27. Dyke

Lucas ran after Mike in the hall. He was very happy because the day before he went on a date with Gabrielle and couldn't wait to tell his friend. He explained him that they went to the movie theater at the mall before going to the restaurant in town, and before she left—

- "Dude!" Lucas interrupted himself, giving a tap to Mike and showing the locker at his right.

Mike turned his head and wide opened his eyes. The locker was tagged with words like « dyke », « slut », « disease », « Nature's error », « go away », and threats of death.

- "It's Jane's locker!" Mike stated. "She can't see that!"

The two boys ran to it and tried to erase it with their hands.

- "We need water!" Lucas told.

- "What are you doing?" a voice asked behind them.

They both started, turned, and tried to hide the locker by raising their arms in front of it, trying to act normally.

- "We are just...being cool," Lucas answered.

- "Then be cool on another locker, it's mine, get off it, I'm not really in the mood," Jane grumbled.

- "Why? You don't need anything from your locker," Mike intervened, feeling his arms becoming groggy.

- "My History book is inside!"

- "Pff, who needs a book in History," Lucas told.

- "You are ten years old or what!? Move!"

Jane grabbed them and pushed them away from her locker. When she saw what was written on, her heart stopped. She was living,

again and again, the same thing that ruined all her schoolings. All her memories were jostling in her head. She was sad and angry, but more particularly scared. She knew this too well, she thought she had lived the worst, but she was always thinking that people could always do worse. She thought she could finish her year with no problems but apparently not! Her eyes were travelling between all the words she had heard too much and knew more than good.

Lucas and Mike looked at each other with the same sad eyes. They noticed her body shaking and the tears coming in her eyes. Lucas placed a hand on her shoulder.

- "Jane, are you okay?" the boy softly asked.

The girl detached with difficulties her eyes from her locker and turned her head in his direction, coming back to Earth. She gulped, opened her locker, took her books, and went to class without making a comment. This time, the murmurs and the looks were for her. She put her hood and her headphone to hide in her own world, like she used to do. On her way, she met Max's eyes which seemed sad. Jane had a lot of things to tell her, but not here, she was the bad person in this story.

Max watched her friend walking away from her, hiding under her hood like if she had leprosy. She would have loved to do something but what? She was lost. She joined Mike who was in front of Jane's locker. She discovered the inscriptions on it and felt her heart tensing more.

- "It's awful," Mike told.

- "I hope you are talking about (points at the locker) this."

- "Of course, I already knew she was lesbian."

- "Really? She told you?"

- "Um, yeah, at our date, I was acting stupid so she told me this to...calm me," Mike explained, scratching the back of his head. "You should have seen her eyes, it was so hard for her to tell me this, she was so scared..."

- "Oh no..." Max sighed.

- "Found it!" Lucas told, holding a bucket of water in his left hand and a remover and dishcloths in his other hand.

- "Cool, let's wash it," Mike said.

Max felt a warm sensation in her heart, like a relief. Jane wasn't alone in this, she could count on Mike and Lucas, ready to wash her locker for her. And Beverly, who stand up against her own friends for her. She grabbed a dishcloth and helped them, thinking it was the thing to do, supporting her.

- "You knew?" Lucas asked, scrubbing the word « dyke ».

- "No, not since last Saturday. And you?" Max answered.

- "I had the hypothesis. She became weird when she saw Gabrielle last time, and she whispered a « wow » meaning everything. It was cute, at least she finds my girlfriend pretty," the young boy smiled.

- "Yeah...wait, girlfriend ?" the redhead frowned.

- "Yep, since this week-end."

- "And she is consenting?"

- "Fuck off Max," Lucas chuckled.

The group giggled while they were washing. When they finished, Lucas brought back the cleaning products to the maintenance man and went to their first class with his friends. They entered the room and saw everyone looking at Jane, murmuring and laughing. They sat at their chairs, not believing them. Beverly, Dustin, and Will arrived five minutes before the ring and sat with their friends. Will was divided with his feelings about this, he was glad Jane was lesbian, he was feeling less lonely, but he didn't want it to happen like that, he didn't want her to suffer.

- "You know?" Beverly asked.

They all nodded.

- "Why does everybody know? What happened?" Mike told.
- "It's our coach. She saw her kissing a girl, and she told the team, who probably told everyone," Bev explained.
- "It could be Troy too," Max intervened.
- "Troy? Why Troy?" Dustin frowned.
- "The coach is his stepmother."
- "Really!?" Beverly got surprised.
- "This son of a bitch!" Dustin grumbled, hitting the table with his fist.

The brutal sound caught everyone's attention. Dustin didn't fade and looked at them with eyes meaning « what do you want !? ».

- "Hey, losers!" Alban called from the back of the class. "You're not tired of collecting all the garbages you find !? Frog face, Carbon, Toothless, Queer, Incest, Freckles, and now Dyke!? What a beautiful group of friends!"

The class laughed out loud while Beverly stood to show him her punch a bit closer. Sadly, Lucas and Dustin stopped her in her way and forced her to sit.

- "Ouh ouh, I'm so scared !" the young blonde boy quipped. "(turns to Jane) Hey, pussy eater, you're not horny with all those girls around you? (stands and walks to her) You're not wet? (stops at less than one centimeter of the girl who was looking down) The crazy Sister wasn't that crazy in fact, huh? She saw clearly in your eyes what you are. Did you try to get in her bed? Did you touch her? Maybe, your mother showed you too much affection..."

Jane saw red. If there was one subject to avoid, it was her mother. All her fear disappeared, replaced by anger. She quickly stood, grabbed his hair, and hit her desk with his face, multiple times. All the class gasped in terror while the blonde boy was screaming and begging her to stop.

- "What's happening in here!?" Mr. Smith asked, finally showing up.

"Miss Brown, let Mr. Johns go."

Jane gulped with difficulties and opened her hand. Alban lost his balance and fell on his butt, his face covered of blood.

- "I'm bleeding!" the young boy panicked. "She broke my nose! THIS BITCH FUCKING BROKE MY NOSE!"

- "You got what you were looking for!" Mike angrily stated.

- "ENOUGH!" the teacher ordered. "Miss Brown, go to the principal. Now."

The girl took her stuff and left the room with no hesitation, a bit relieved to not have all those eyes on her anymore.

- "Mr. J ohns, go to the nurse and then the headmaster. Mr. Ramirez, you bring him."

Pablo took Alban by his arm and forced him to follow him, leaving some bloody drops on his way.

- "You, (points at Will) what happened?" Mr. Smith asked.

- "Um...Alban mocked Jane about her...sexuality, and Jane answered the best she could..."

- "Does everybody agree with that?"

- "Well," a guy said from the football team, "she was provoking him too!"

- "Bullshit!" Mike angrily told. "She was trying to hide in her hood because all of you were mocking her! What the fuck is wrong with all of you!?"

- "Mr. Wheeler."

- "Yeah, sorry for my language but they want to make you believe that Jane is the bad person in this story whereas she is clearly not! People tagged awful words on her locker, and you really thought she provoked anyone after that!?"

- "I'm not here to believe anything. For now, there is nothing we can do, so I'm asking you to stop thinking about it and to focus on the class. So, today..."

Mr. Smith began his class like if nothing happened. Mike looked at him with disbelieving eyes. This guy didn't care! Mike was sure he was thinking it was Jane's fault.

During the changeover, Troy had to bring something for the headmaster's secretary and saw Jane, sitting on a chair in front of his office. He was waiting for the woman to give him what he was looking for, giving some quick looks behind him, watching his friend.

- "You went hard with Alban. His nose is broken," Troy told from the secretary's desk.

- "Good," Jane answered.

- "(turns to Jane) You broke the nose of one of our best players, and you're happy!?"

- "He deserved it."

- "(grabbs what he was looking for, walks to her, and bends to face her) Just because you chose to be like that doesn't give you the right to hit people. It's all your choice!"

Troy was going to leave, but Jane grabbed his arm. She slowly stood with an angry face which worried the young boy.

- "Do you really think someone choose to be treated like that? For now, it's just some words on the locker and some murmurs, but what Alban did just now, it's the next step, they will make « jokes » about me and my weird lifestyle, people will laugh because they think it's normal to laugh at me and will begin to make « jokes » too, not caring of how I take it and then...it will get worse and worse," Jane stated with tears in her eyes.

- "You could have, at least, told me," Troy replied a bit angry.

- "Told you?" the girl scoffed. "I hope you're kidding! You use words like « fag » and « queer » all day long, and you wonder why I didn't

tell you!? I really hoped no one would discover this about me, I...I was supposed to do my last year with the only project to be graduated, that's all!"

- "You're not really good to hide it, you know that?" Troy rhetorically asked.

- "What? You knew it?"

- "I wasn't sure, but you were looking at her the way I wanted you to look at me, that's why I didn't invite you for a date or something like that, I knew it was useless."

- "Why are you mad then!?"

- "Because everyone was thinking I was going to date you, and I let them thinking I had a chance! And now I'm the guy who was flirting with a dyke!"

- "But it's not my problem, Troy! You can't be mad at me because of YOUR mistake!"

- "Yeah but I began to think that maybe if I tried..."

- "What!? You could cure me!? I could totally fall in love with a boy!? Become normal!? That's what you thought!?"

The bell rang, but the two teens kept staring at each other with dark eyes.

- "Miss Brown, don't break all our football players," the headmaster intervened with a calm tone, talking with the secretary.

Troy brutally freed himself and went to class, letting Jane in front of the headmaster's office waiting for her sister to arrive.

The party chose the break of the morning to see Jane. The girl was still in front of the headmaster's office, laying down on the chairs with her headphone, while Alban was a bit farther with bandages on his nose, his eyes closed and listening to music too. They slowly approached, Max staying behind. When she noticed them, she straightened and sat to face them, taking off her headphone.



- "Mozart?" Beverly asked with a joking tone.

- "Almost, Sex Pistols," Jane answered with a sad tone.

The group didn't find anything to say to cheer her up. Nothing could make her happy for now, they could see it. Mike sat next to her and wrapped his arm around her shoulder to bring her in a side hug. The girl looked away, feeling the tears coming.

- "You're waiting for your sister?" Lucas asked.

- "Yeah...she works all the morning, she waits for a colleague to replace her."

- "You will miss an entire day of school!?"

- "I hope not, I will have to catch up everything!"

- "We can help you, you know," Dustin told.

- "Yeah, yeah..." Jane sighed.

The headmaster opened his door and watched with insistence the group of teens.

- "You know you are not allowed to be here, except if you want a detention."

- "We are leaving," Beverly told.

- "That's what I thought," the headmaster answered, going back in his office.

They all watched Jane with a sorry pout before going to their next class. Max stayed a bit, leaned on the storage locker next to the chairs, like if she was hiding, and watched Jane with sad eyes.

- "I'm sorry..." Max whispered.

- "I don't care," Jane quickly answered with a sharp tone.

Jane put back her headphone and lied again on the chairs, ignoring Max's presence. The redhead's heart broke at her words, she was

desperate to find a way to be forgiven, but Jane seemed too hurt for now. She didn't insist and went to her next class, her thoughts focused on Jane.

Before the lunch time, Constance finally arrived. She took her sister in her arms and kissed her forehead.

- "Why do you kiss me?" frowned Jane frowned.

- "Because you look sad, and I don't know if I'll still love you after, I just anticipate," the sister joked.

The two girls entered the office where Alban and his parents were already waiting.

- "What's that!?" Alban asked with a disgust tone while looking at Constance.

- "Your worst nightmare," the blonde teen answered with her deep voice.

The headmaster invited everyone to sit in front of him, Constance and Jane on his right, and Alban and his parents on his left.

- "Jane and Alban had been involved in a fight," the headmaster began.

- "What!? She attacked me!" Alban got angry.

- "You insulted me!" Jane replied with the same fury.

- "It doesn't justify!"

- "No but it explains!"

- "Enough!" the headmaster intervened.

The two teens shutted up but without breaking the eyes contact.

- "Mr. Watchby," Alban's father intervened, "I think if the classes were not mixed with people with a lower social status, problems like this would never happen."

- "I'm sorry, do you have a problem with our social status!?" Constance angrily frowned.

- "It's better to not mix apples and oranges."

- "Since when!?"

- "We wouldn't be here."

- "Yeah, we wouldn't be here if you weren't endorsing his behavior toward people who are different of him! Because, I'm sorry, but we are not all rich with the chance to be gone at college and to find jobs just by snapping their fingers!"

- "Do you really think she is right in this story!?"

- "No! I've never said she should have hit her desk with his head, but it was apparently the only way for him to stop!"

- "I was avenging Troy!" Alban angrily stated.

- "Troy doesn't need to get a revenge!" Jane answered. "He is old enough to come to me to talk! (stands) And don't talk about my mom!"

- "(stands) I fuck your mother!"

The two teens began a debacle of insults while Constance and the parents were trying to hold their kids, yelling at each other too. The headmaster hit his table with the palm of his hand to ask for silence. The adults stopped arguing and forced the kids to sit again.

- "(turns to Constance) He talked about mom," Jane stated in a murmur.

- "I heard, calm down now," Constance calmly ordered.

- "Mr. Johns, you will do an entire day of detention," Mr. Watchby began.

- "What!? For what!?" Alban got angry.

- "Provocation, harassment, humiliation, and homophobia."
- "It's going too far!"
- "I hope it's a joke," his father intervened.
- "No, it's not. Now, if you don't mind, I would like to talk to Miss Brown and her sister, privately."

The parents and the kid stood and killed the headmaster with their eyes.

- "It's a shame!" the father dramatically said, pointing his finger to him like a threaten.

They left the room with exaggerated sighs before slamming the door. Jane turned to her sister with a relieved smile, but it faded when she saw her angry face. She was going to have her ass kicked.

- "Two days of suspension, from tomorrow."
- "What!?" Jane told with an upset tone.

Constance tapped her sister and gave her a death glare, wanting her to stop. Jane clenched her jaw before looking down.

- "Are you going to write it in my report?" Jane asked, already knowing the answer.
- "Yes. It's the second time you finish in my office in less than one week, and I heard about your fight with other teens at the skatepark. It's why I want you to see the school's psychologist. (Jane leans on her chair, exasperated) It's not an advice, it's an order, am I clear?" the headmaster firmly said.
- "Yes," Jane mumbled.
- "Good. You can go back in class now."

Jane stood and left the office, followed by her sister who had her hand on her little sister's shoulder. Once outside, Constance stopped in front of Jane. The girl's heart began to race, knowing what was

going after.

- "What were you thinking!?" the teen asked with anger. "What's your goal!? Going to jail!? It's an assault! His parents can claim a file for this! And you know what's that means!? No police academy for you! This kind of behavior could cost you your future! Do you hear me!? Now you really need to calm down before it's definitively over for you! What you did doesn't make you smarter than the bully! It's as stupid as them and I know you're not! Be smart! Never hit the first, that's what I taught you! You will go to this psychologist and clear your god damn head! And you will use those two days at home to think about all of this! Is it clear!?"

Jane gulped with difficulties and nodded. She knew her sister was right, she was rarely angry after her, only for the good reasons. Jane had been angry for days now because of the stress, and she clearly needed some time to figure it out.

- "Good. I'll talk to his parents and apologize for you, I don't want you to have more problems," Constance said with a calmer tone.

- "Do you still love me?" Jane shyly asked.

- "Of course, I can't not loving you. Go to class now, I'll pick you up after school."

- "Okay...thank you."

Constance took her sister in her arms before going back to her work. Jane watched the clock and ran to her next class. It was sport and the field was a bit far from the headmaster's office. When she arrived, she opened the changing room door so brutally that it got everyone's attention. All the girls were watching her. For a moment, she forgot that everyone knew she was lesbian, but the looks they gave to her brought her back in the hard reality. She froze a moment at the door, not knowing if it was better to change here or somewhere else. And the only free place was next to Max, the girl who ruined everything.

- "Don't get wet Jane, it would be disgusting," a girl mocked.

The joke provoked the hilarity of the entire room, except Max who

felt sorry for her. Some girls hid their bodies from Jane while others were making worse jokes. One even threw one of her clothes to Jane. The young girl didn't hesitate and decided to change in the toilets.

When Jane joined her class, people kept murmuring while the teacher was talking. She didn't know if they knew she could hear them or if it was on purpose, but she tried to not focus on them and to think about baseball. She wanted to show them she had value by killing everything at baseball, but even this wasn't enough.

- "God, you are really mad after balls! Is this why you eat pussy!?" a guy mocked with a sharp tone. "Fucking homo."

Jane left the field after this. She went back to the bench under the laughs of her colleagues, wondering if it would stop one day.

## 28. Life is unfair

It was 5 am and, as usual, Jane woke up. She got ready, trying to make the least noises possible to not awake her sister. She slowly opened her door and began to walk in the corridor on tip toes when suddenly, the kitchen's lamp lighted.

- "Where do you think you are going!?" Constance firmly asked.

The young girl turned her head to see her sister sitting at the round table in the middle, the furniture on the left, and the living room on the right.

- "Um...running?" Jane answered with a tensed smile.

- "No, I don't think so."

- "What!? But why!?"

Constance stood and slowly approached her sister.

- "Because you have two days of suspension, you're not in vacation."

- "But I—"

- "But nothing Jane! You've been too far yesterday! I thought I was clear but apparently not. I want you to stay at home the two entire days to think about your behavior!" Constance told.

- "I don't need two days to think!" Jane got angry.

- "Then, use your free time to catch up what you missed yesterday and what you're gonna miss those two days. I'm sure you have enough to do to keep you busy this long."

- "But it's not fair! It wasn't even my fault!"

- "From the moment you decided to use his head as a hammer, it became your fault!"

- "He provoked me and talked about mom! I won't allow anyone to

talk about mom ! No one can talk about mom! NO ONE! (hits the wall next to her) NO ONE!" Jane yelled.

Jane stopped a moment and just stared at her sister. This anger she had contained for years was exploding more and more with the days, and it was scaring her.

- "I told you I didn't want to see her again. She is dead for me, her body is alive, but her brain is fucked up, and I need to do my mourning correctly, but everytime we come to her, I'm angry and sad and I hate everyone. Mom is dead, nothing can save her now, not even our visits every month. I'm tired of worrying for someone who doesn't know who I am, who thinks I'm just a friend for a day," Jane firmly explained with tears in her eyes and her throat tightening. "I have enough to deal with me, I don't have the time and the energy to do it, school is becoming hell and the only moment where I feel good is when I run or ride my bike with music in my ears, not hearing all the haters reminding me that I'm gay, like if I already didn't know! I'm eighteen next month, if I wanna run I just run."

- "Then run in your room, 'cause you're not leaving."

Jane saw red. She wanted to break everything around like if her muscles and her brain needed it. She began to breath heavily with her mouth, her chest going up and down fastly.

- "I don't recognise you! You are violent and yelling at everyone like if it was all their fault!" Constance angrily stated.

- "But...IT IS THEIR FAULT! I never asked to be like that, all I want is to have a normal life, but this part of me will always be considered as abnormal, as a disease! I just spent one day with them knowing it and, it was horrible to live! My locker is tagged, the others made jokes when they are not whispering things about me, girls don't want me to change with them because they think I'm watching them! It's always the same thing! No matter what I do, I'll always be in the wrong! "

- "Then don't make it worse! Be in the wrong without doing nothing wrong! Answer with words not fists!"



- "THIS IS UNFAIR!" Jane yelled going to her room and slamming her door.

- "LIFE IS UNFAIR!"

Jane collapsed on her bed and began to cry on her pillow before falling asleep again.

The party met at the cafeteria at lunch, as usual. They were all quiet, lost in their thoughts, and still shocked by the day before.

- "Do you think she didn't show up because of it?" Mike asked.

- "It wouldn't be surprising, it probably not the first time she is treated like that," Beverly answered.

- "You think ?" Dustin told.

- "Why do you think she didn't tell anyone?" she rhetorically said .  
"She told Mike only because he was yelling and getting mad, not because she was trusting him, she was frightened, that's what Mike said, she doesn't trust anyone with this and, I'm sorry but I can't blame her for this, you have seen the mess yesterday? Imagine when they will find worse things to do to her. We can't let that happen."

- "Yeah but what do you want us to do? I mean, we have been bullied all our middle school and high school, and you expect us (shows everyone) to fight the bullies?" Lucas intervened.

- "I just want to protect my friend, and you should all want it."

- "But we want! We just...don't know how! Do you?" Mike told.

- "I...I don't...We could...show her our support!"

- "Support doesn't protect from words," Will said.

- "I know, but we have to do something before it's too late! She was really bad yesterday and, if it's not the first time, she probably suffered of this all her schooling and one day, she will be done. One day she will entered this school with a machine gun and shoot everyone that hurt her or shoot herself or both!"

The possibility of Jane doing one of those things iced the atmosphere. None of them thought she could be capable of doing something like this. But none of them thought she could hit Alban's face on a table before yesterday.

- "You okay Max?" Beverly frowned. "You've been very quiet about this story."

- "I, I have nothing to say," the redhead answered, looking at her tray.

- "Is...is Jane's sexuality a problem for you?"

- "Of course not," Max said with a small voice.

- "So why do you say anything?"

- "Are you implying that I'm homophobic now!? Really!?"

- "I don't know, Neil, Billy, they are not really healthy persons."

- "I hadn't seen Billy for years now, and I don't care what Neil tells me. Why I would become an asshole just now whereas I had multiple occasions before!?" Max angrily stated.

- "I don't know, I'm sorry, I didn't want to upset you..." Bev apologized.

- "I know...it's just, I see no solutions for this."

- "We didn't even try!"

- "But what do you wanna try!? Lucas is right, we are unable to get rid of our bullies. How are we supposed to do it for someone else!? They are much more, it's a lost war!"

Beverly didn't answer. Max was right, they couldn't do anything, and maybe with time they would stop by themselves. It was what she hoped, they all hoped.

After school, Mike decided to see Jane at her work, but Joyce told him she wasn't working today, so he went directly to her apartment. When he knocked, it was her sister who opened to him.

- "What do you want?" the blonde head asked.
- "Um...I, I...(clears his throat) Is Jane here?"
- "Yes, why?"
- "Um, she, she didn't come today, so I brought her some of our...works. Of the day," Mike said, feeling embarrassment growing inside him.
- "She is suspended for two days, that's why she didn't come. And she is punished by me too."
- "Oh...Can I, can I see her?"

Constance clenched her jaw. She looked behind like if she was watching someone while she was thinking of her answer before looking at the young boy again.

- "You have one hour," the big sister firmly told.
- "Thank you," Mike answered with relief.

The young boy slid uncomfortably his body between the door and the wall as Constance didn't open it more. He entered in a small entrance with a coat hanger at his left and three bikes at his right -he recognised Jane's green BMX- a door behind the bikes, another door a bit farther with a Sex Pistols poster on it, a door in the small wall in front of him, a door with a poster he couldn't see from where he was at the left, and finally an opening between this door and the coat hanger, with a natural light coming from it. He made a few steps before bending to watch this room. There were a round table at the middle, kitchen furniture at his left -with pictures of the girls on the fridge- with a French window -making all the light- two pieces of furniture with board games and books on it -not tidied- behind the table, a couch on the right, against the wall of the corridor, in front of a TV with a coffee table between.

Jane was sitting at the table, doing some homework with her headphone, which explained why she didn't hear him enter. She seemed exhausted, and her eyes were puffy, like if she had cried all day long. When she noticed Mike, she quickly removed her

headphone and wiped her face.

- "Hi," the boy softly smiled.

- "Hi," Jane almost sighed. "I didn't hear you."

- "It's okay, your sister opened to me."

- "Yeah, I hoped she did, or it would mean you broke the door," the young girl shyly joked.

- "Too dangerous, the door would have won," Mike chuckled. "(shows the chair next to her) Can I?"

- "Oh yeah (moves her notebooks and other school stuff) sure, sorry."

- "Don't apologize, it's fine," the black-haired boy reassured, sitting next to her.

Constance and Jane exchanged a look. Jane had a small nod, to thank her for letting him enter. The sister answered with the same sign.

- "I'll go to school, to see how was the day and to tell Robin I'll come tomorrow. When I come back, I want you to be here, you're not—"

- "—allowed to leave the apartment, I know. And I won't," Jane calmly said. "You can leave."

Constance nodded, kissed Jane's top head, took her coat, and left the apartment.

- "Is everything okay?" Mike frowned.

- "Yeah, it's just...she can be hard with me when I fuck up. And she is right," Jane answered with a tired voice.

- "I don't think you fucked up. Okay, it was surprising and a bit shocking; but Alban deserved it more than anyone!"

- "No. It wasn't right. You can't settle things by the violence, not if you're the first puncher. If you punch first, you're in the wrong," Jane explained still writing things on her notebook.

- "Yeah...It was still cool," Mike smiled.

Jane had a small chuckle and shook her head. She didn't think it was cool, she thought it was crazy, and over-reacted. But she was hoping at the same time, that, maybe, they would be scared of her and would leave her alone. It was a small hope, but still a hope.

- "We missed you today," Mike said, cutting the girl in her thoughts.

- "Oh yeah?" Jane answered with a doubtful tone.

- "Of course, you are our friend!"

- "But for how long?" the girl asked, looking at him.

- "What?" the young boy frowned.

- "They all said that at the beginning before everyone convinced them I'm a monster with an awful and disgusting problem or before it became too oppressing for you to hear all the insults they are sending to me! How long are you gonna support this!?"

- "I, I've already been supporting this from years!"

- "Exactly, you don't need more. When you will understand that going to their side could stop the bullying to you, you won't hesitate," Jane angrily stated.

- "Jane! When you told me, I supported you and I still do, how can you think I'll turn my back to you!?" Mike said, feeling hurt.

- "Many people supported me before changing their minds."

- "Jane, not everyone is like that. Troy spends his time calling Will names and we're still his friends, defending him when he needs."

- "Yeah, but after, when you will realise that maybe he can't defend himself and will be bullied by everyone at college and won't tell you because he will feel ashamed, what are you gonna do!?"

- "Like I always do, love him, help him, support him, because that's what friends do, and I'm sorry you never met real friends befo—"

- "Whatever," Jane cut.
- "It's unfair Jane," Mike stated, now upset.
- "Life is unfair."

Mike didn't insist. He knew that Beverly was right when she said Jane already lived identical situation, and she apparently lived them alone, or, at least, with her sister as only support. He showed her what they've done at school during the day and tried to cheer her up, but the girl was too depressed to even smile.

When Constance went back home, Mike was already gone. Jane was still working on the table without headphones this time.

- "Hey," Constance softly said.
- "Hey."
- "You can run tomorrow if you want, but only if you came back before I leave."
- "In fact, I think I'm gonna stay here, to take some rest and...I thought that, maybe, we could wake up at 6, to spend some time together? If you want?" Jane shyly proposed.
- "Yeah, I would love to," the blonde head smiled.

The two girls exchanged a smile. Constance walked behind Jane and wrapped her arms around her for a tight hug. Jane let drop some tears of weariness. The big sister told her she could stop for today and to take some rest. The day had been long.

## 29. Papers

Jane's days of suspension were over, allowing the girl to come back to school. Apparently, no one forgot about her. She reached her locker with difficulties, being hit at her shoulders by boys and girls, majority of the Football team or cheerleaders calling her « fag », « fucking homo », « dyke » or « slut ». And all she could answer was...nothing. It would make things worse. She opened her locker, tagged again, and a few small papers fell from it. She looked down, her legs shaking and her breathing accelerating. One of them fell on the written side. « Kill yourself ! » with a drawing of a person shooting their head surrounded by people laughing at them. She picked the papers up and hesitated to watch them. She knew it was all the same, all wishing her to die or worse. Her hand was shaking, but she couldn't look away from those papers. A hand on her shoulder made her start, dropping the papers again. She turned and tried to step back, hitting her locker, with her hands ready to fight.

- "Hey, I'm sorry, I didn't want to scare you," Beverly told with a soft tone. "Are you okay?"

Jane looked at her with wide opened eyes and her breathing heavy. For one second, she thought she was going to have problems.

- "Yeah, I'm fine," Jane answered still ready to fight.

Beverly pinched her lips together and nodded. It was obvious she wasn't fine, but nothing she could say would make her feel better. Jane looked down at the papers, discovering the other words on them. All her bad memories were coming back in her head in a mess with her ears buzzing so much that she barely heard Beverly calling.

- "Jane!" Bev called louder than before.

Jane quickly looked up, but this time she was angry. Not in a big anger like the days before, but a bit mad.

- "Don't look at the papers," the redhead continued.

- "I need to pick them up," Jane answered.

- "No, you don't!"

- "Yes! I don't want this in front of my locker!" the girl got angry.

- "Okay, okay, calm down, I'll pick them up."

- "No! This is my shit! I don't need you to have pity for me! Pity doesn't help!"

- "I don't have pity, Jane! Just calm down!"

Beverly placed her hands on Jane's arms to calm her and to make her stop moving. Jane looked away with her wet eyes and bit her left fist, hopping on the spot.

- "Compassion and pity are two different things," Beverly told.

- "I know, I'm sorry," Jane said, still looking away. "I'm...I'm a bit out of my mind, lately..."

- "It's okay, I understand," the redhead weakly smiled. "Let me take care of the papers and, we could walk to Biology together?"

- "I...I don't think it's a good idea. I'll go to class alone."

- "You sure?"

- "Yeah, see you."

Beverly wanted to tell more, but Jane was already far, her headphone on her ears. She was feeling useless, she thought she just failed with Jane, she didn't show her enough that she was caring about her. But Jane was too scared to talk to someone, too scared of the consequences, she knew this too well.

The next days, Jane stayed distant from everyone. She was eating at the cafeteria only a few times in the weeks, in class she was sitting far from the party, and she was talking to them only if they were saying the first words.

It had been two weeks now that Jane was victim of her colleagues' mockeries. More papers, more tags, more jokes, more murmurs, even



words tagged in the girls' toilets and changing rooms. But what she didn't know, it was that things were going to be worse.

### 30. Cafeteria

Jane entered the school, her chin up, trying to keep the little dignity she had. She didn't want to show them she was scared, she didn't want to be a victim, it would make them too happy. She approached her locker, without showing any emotion and ignoring their mocking smiles. When she opened her locker, no papers fell which could be a good or a bad news. Maybe they got bored and stopped or...maybe they found something else. Someone leaning next to her cut her in her thoughts. It was Jenifer with a big smile.

- "Um...hi," Jane frowned with a shaking voice.

- "Hey, it's been a long time we hadn't talk," the blonde girl said.

- "We never really talked," the young girl stated.

- "Yeah...It's a shame, you're really cute," Jenifer told, biting her bottom lip and twisting a lock of hair.

- "Uh...thanks."

Jane didn't dare to look at the other girl. Jenifer was a pretty girl, and Jane wasn't insensitive to her charm. She tried to control her breathing, but she was sure she was blushing. Jenifer slowly approached Jane and slid sensually her hand on Jane's torso until her neck to finish in her hair. With her other hand, she grabbed firmly Jane by her waist and brought her closer to her; Jane's nose at the level of Jenifer's chin, feeling the taller girl's breathing on her face. Jenifer caressed Jane's cheek and raised her chin to look at her in the eyes. She began to get closer and closer to Jane, their lips almost touching, Jane ready to take the kiss, before stopping and smiling.

- "You really thought I was a slut like you?" Jenifer rhetorically asked.

Jane frowned and realised the big mistake she just did. Jenifer pushed Jane against the lockers and was joined by Alban and his friends of the Football team.

- "God Jane, you are disgusting!" Alban stated with a mocking laugh.

- "Bitch," a guy coughed next to him, making them laugh.
- "(turns to Jenifer) That's it!? A fucking game for you!?" Jane got worked up.
- "Just a small bet," the blonde girl smiled. "I got, a blush, a fast breathing and almost a kiss."
- "Yeah, you did a good work," Alban smirked.
- "I'm not a toy!"
- "No, you're not, you're a fucking animal! Damn, you are ready to kiss the first girl who approaches you! That's creepy!"
- "Playing with someone's feelings is not creepy, assholes!?"
- "Aww (oppresses Jane with his body) who thought a slut could have feelings? Troy had feelings too, and you didn't hesitate to play with his."
- "No, I didn't," Jane answered gritting her teeth.

Alban and the others had a small chuckle. They were going to leave, but Alban stared at Jane before spitting on her face under his friends' eyes, laughing more. Jane stayed a moment against her locker, not sure of what happened. She was feeling the sticky liquid slowly flowing on her eye and cheek. Her breathing was getting faster and faster by anger and embarrassment. People were all staring at her, murmuring. They were always murmuring, but no one cared of how she was, if she was hurt, or what she was feeling. She was just the freak that everyone was looking at without approaching, too scared to finish like her. But she wasn't as mad at them as against herself. She didn't understand why she fell in this stupid trap, she should had been smarter than them! She was feeling weak, everything was her fault.

She couldn't stand Alban's saliva on her and went to the girls' bathroom, even if on the door was written « normal girls only (not like Jane) ». Her mere presence was enough to evacuate the room. All the girls, watching themselves in the mirror, left the place, looking at Jane with disgusted eyes. Once alone, Jane went in front of the sink

and began to clean her face, again, and again, and again. She wanted to clean herself, she wanted to be normal, she didn't want to feel like that around a girl anymore, it was too hard. So she cleaned herself, again and again, until she heard someone going out of one of the toilets. She stopped, her face flowing of big water drops and looked at the sink, waiting for this girl to leave, like the others. But she didn't. The girl stayed next to her, watching her with soft eyes.

- "Hey Jane," Clara said with a smile.

- "What do you want !?" Jane angrily asked.

- "I, I was wondering if I could ask you something..."

- "NO, I haven't been raped by my father! NO, I don't hate boys! NO, I don't need to find the right boy to cure me! NO, I don't rape straight girls to infect them with my virus! NO, I don't touch myself in the changing room! NO, I didn't get wet when you showed me your fucking new bra! NO, I'm not a sexual predator or a pervert! I'm just trying to live, but no one wants me to!"

Jane didn't wait for an answer and left the toilets. She didn't care what Clara wanted to ask, it was probably not better than the other curious she met those last days.

Will was in line to take his lunch. He usually took something, so he didn't have to wait, but this morning he was so late that he forgot it. His friends were not here yet, except Jane who was alone at a table. The girl was avoiding them and was always angry, he was a bit scared of her reactions so he preferred avoiding her too. Will noticed he wasn't the only one staring at her. Troy, a bit farther, seemed sad, like if he was missing her. Maybe Jane was right, Troy wasn't this bad, but he still bullied them, and Will was scared of him too, for him, he was bad.

When he looked again at Jane, this time she was surrounded by people. Alban, his gorilla friends, and the cheerleaders. It was bad, really bad. The way they were looking at her with their mischevious smile, the way they were overhanging her, showing their muscles to frighten her, and the way they were laughing, already proud of them. It was pathetic, bullying someone as nice as Jane to feel stronger was

getting Will out of him. The teens were pushing her while laughing, and Abigail took the sandwich she was eating and began to eat it in front of her. Will thought Troy was going to do something, but the young boy didn't move, he was watching. Will, for the first time, found a little courage and slowly approached them.

- "Hey," Will intervened with a small voice. "Leave her alone."

- "Go play somewhere else Queer, we are busy," Alban answered with a small chuckle at the end.

- "No. Leave her alone," he ordered a bit firmly.

This time they didn't answer. Abigail stood and faced him at less than one centimeter. Will began to regret his gesture. Someone stronger would have helped more than him right now. Even Jane seemed to not understand why he was there.

- "You have something to say, little girl!?" Abigail asked in a sigh. "You really think you had a chance to stop normal people!? Yeah, that's what I thought."

Abigail pushed Will who hit a bag and fell on the floor. The cafeteria laughed at him and his clumsiness. Will was feeling stupid and weak, as usual. How could he think he could change something? And now they were going to bother Jane more. Alban and Derek grabbed Jane's arms while Abigail was emptying a milk carton on Jane's head who was struggling.

- "Hey, enough guys, let's just eat now," Troy intervened.

The teens, who were around Jane, laughed before following their friend at a table. Will and Jane stared at each other with the same embarrassment. No one in this room was decided to help them, they were all alone in their own shit. When Jane stood, Will thought she was going to help him to stand, but she just left the cafeteria. On her way out, she met the rest of the party but ignored them, one more time, with a special dark glare for Max. Beverly ran to Will to help him to get up while Max followed Jane in the halls, needing to confront her. It had been weeks now. She was always cold with her, with her dark eyes, she couldn't stand it anymore. Jane was at her

locker, trying to find new clothes. The halls were empty, it was the best moment to talk about it. She approached her with a determined walk.

- "Look, I get it, you're mad at me and I underst—"

- "NO YOU DON'T!" Jane angrily cut. "You don't understand a thing of my anger right now! (slams her locker and looks at Max) YOU are the one who kissed, YOU wanted it but YOU are not blamed for this! YOU kissed ME, but I'm the one in the wrong! This, (shows her locker) is not on YOUR locker, this, (shows papers with insults on it) is not for you, and this, (shows the milk flowing from her head) didn't happen to you!"

Jane took a moment to look away. She was feeling the tears coming, and her throat getting tightened didn't allow her to continue her speech. Max was feeling more guilty. She hurt the girl she had a crush on and thought Jane couldn't forgive her for this. She couldn't forgive herself for this neither. Jane took a deep breath and managed to gulp.

- "You are the one who kissed me, but I'm the one who is bullied for this kiss I didn't ask for," Jane stated with a shaking voice, and some tears in her eyes. "I kissed a girl, that's what they think I did, you're not involved in this shit because I'm the one who kissed this unknown girl! So yeah, I think it's your fault because you could have done it in another way or somewhere else! And I hate you for this! A kiss shouldn't hurt!"

Max wanted to apologize but, it wouldn't have changed a thing. Jane took her stuff and left the redhead in the hall. She hated her. Jane was hating her, and the redhead couldn't blame her for this, it was all her fault.

## 31. Friday

It was the end of the week, for Jane's biggest pleasure. Her last period finished, and Jane left the field without passing by the changing room, going directly to the store. She put her headphone, Led Zeppelin loud in her ears, trying to forget this long week. Another long week. Another hard week. But she was glad to have the opportunity to tell Max what the problem was. It was hard for her to stay mad at her, she still had this big crush growing everyday, but it was her only solution right now, she needed time for herself. She was always thinking of her, trying to understand this kiss. Maybe it was for fun and it meant nothing, or maybe she wanted to know how a girl was tasting or it was just...like that, a pulsion. It probably meant nothing, and Jane didn't want to know. For now, she was just walking to her job, far from her problems.

She had some time, so she decided to take the path in the forest, to walk in the calm of the nature, not wanting to see any human around her. She was breathing the fresh air when she had the feeling to be followed. She took off her headphone and looked around. She was alone. She wondered if she wasn't a bit paranoid. She didn't put back her headphone on her ears but in her bag, and kept walking. A branch cracked behind her and the girl started, trying to see who was here.

- "Hey dyke," a boy voice said in the forest with no sympathy.

She turned and saw Alban, again. She began to step back, but someone grabbed her arms and blocked her from running away. A group of teens approached, always the same, football players and cheerleaders, leaded by Alban and Abigail.

- "What the fuck do you want!?" Jane asked, struggling.

- "You have to pay, for all the moment you enjoyed in the changing room and probably more, you damn pervert," Abigail smirked.

- "You should be happy, at least I'm not trying to steal Troy from anyone!"

- "Yeah, but he is always thinking about you," the blonde girl stated, with no smile this time. "He is not the same!"

- "But it's not my fault!"

- "YES IT IS! (quickly walks to her) You thought you could tease all the boys and then be like « oh no I'm a dyke » with no consequences!? You're just a slut, you like seeing the boys getting boners for you!"

- "NO! I never wanted all of this! Let me go! LET ME GO!" Jane screamed, struggling more and feeling the panic growing.

Abigail had a small laugh before grabbing Jane's neck with a crazy face. She tightened more and more her hand, sinking her nails in her victim's skin. She seemed to have pleasure to make suffer Jane. She was scary. Jane felt less and less air travelling her throat, beginning to suffocate and getting dizzy.

- "We will let you go," Abigail began with big red eyes. "But not now."

She put off her hand from Jane's neck, allowing the girl to take a deep breath and to feel alive again. When Jane had a regularly breathing again, Abigail punched her in her stomach. Jane bended because of the pain, and all the air she had inside got expelled. The guy who was holding her threw her on the floor. She tried to stand, but Alban kicked her stomach, making her roll on her side, more of them began to kick her more and more. The pain was so strong that she wasn't feeling anything. She was just seeing the end arriving, ready to leave this world.

But no, Jane wasn't ready. She grabbed a leg, supposed to kick her, and rolled on her side, taking the boy with her. She was now on him and didn't wait a second to punch him in the face. She was punching so hard that she thought her fingers were going to break. But she didn't care, she just wanted them to pay for those horrible weeks she lived. Someone grabbed her arm and threw her behind before she could hit again. A cheerleader kicked the floor, throwing dirt in Jane's eyes. While she was whipping her face, Alban punched her in her chin, stunning the girl on the floor. She kept blinking her eyes with tears falling to clean her face. She couldn't see around her, but



four persons grabbed her arms and legs and blocked them against the floor. Someone wiped her eyes, clearing the view. Abigail and Alban were looking at her with a big and proud smile. Jane was breathing heavily, terrified, and exhausted.

- "Don't worry, it's almost over," Abigail told.

She took something from her pocket and a blade appeared. Jane looked at it with wide opened eyes and more tears falling. She tried to free herself by moving more, but the teens were crushing her body more, twisting her right ankle and hurting her shoulders. Abigail placed the blade on Jane's throat, freezing the girl's body. The victim's bulging eyes were watching the weapon and her assaulter's smile, wondering if she was going to cut her or not. She felt the blade sinking in her neck and a liquid flowing. Abigail removed the blade and sat astride on Jane's belly before cutting up her blue tee-shirt, letting appear the young girl's body full of hematomas. Jane's breathing became more and more irregular. She tried to move again but in vain.

- "Who thought a slut could have such a sexy body," Abigail stated with mockery.

- "LET ME GO!" Jane yelled with tears falling and knowing it was useless.

- "Sssssh," the blonde girl murmured, caressing Jane's chest.

Jane hoped Abigail wasn't going further but she began to caress more her body, between her breasts, then her bra to finish at her belly.

- "Do you like it?" Abigail smirked.

- "NO! STOP IT!" Jane screamed. "Please..."

- "SHUT UP!" Alban yelled.

The blonde boy crushed her left hand with his foot, making scream the girl on the floor.

- "Make her stop," Abigail ordered, watching Jane with no pity.

Alban obeyed, crouched next to her, and covered her mouth with his hand. Jane could hardly breathe, and Alban was crushing more her mouth with his big and moist hand. She was still trying to free herself, but they were more on her, and her entire body was almost motionless now. She felt wet lips kissing slowly her, her chest, her bra until her belly. Then, a hand slid to her jeans and grabbed brutally between her legs, making her tense and scream in Alban's hand.

- "I'm sure she is wet," Abigail smirked.

Jane was breathing heavily with her nose and closed her eyes, dropping more tears. When she thought Abigail was going under the pants, she felt an awful pain on her chest, like if she was cutting her. She tried to scream again, but the lack of air was beginning to stun and choke her. Once finished, they all spat on her and abandoned her like this with evil laughs.

She was laying down on the earth, watching the sky with her wet eyes. She thought she was dead, but her entire body was hurting, meaning she was still alive. She didn't know if she could move or not. She was still not believing what just happened. Did it really happen? Or was it a dream? It wasn't a dream, everytime she was opening her eyes she was still there.

Joyce was reading a magazine behind her counter at the store. She was surprised because Jane was always in advance, but this time she was fifteen minutes late. The mother thought it was because of school and that maybe she had some works to do. But her boss, Jerry, didn't care. He was mad and blamed many times Joyce for Jane's late. Like if it was her fault! No one was here anyway, Jane's presence wouldn't change anything.

She heard the automatic doors opening and stood to greet the customer. Joyce's smile faded when she saw Jane's state. Her bottom lip was a bit swollen, her neck was red with a cut, her white tee-shirt had some red on it, like if she had bled, and her hands were bleeding too.

- "Sorry, I'm late," Jane mumbled, looking down.

- "I don't care Jane," Joyce firmly told, thinking it was stupid to apologize. "(She walks to her and places her hands on her shaking arms) What happened to you!?"

- "I...I fell in the forest..."

- "Sit behind the counter, I'll bring you some ice."

Joyce went to the back shop while Jane was limping to the counter. She took support on it and waited a moment for the pain to leave. When Joyce came back, she saw that Jane couldn't walk and wrapped her arm around her to help her. Once sat, the mother raised Jane's right leg and placed it on a chair. She gave an ice pack for her lip and hands before watching her ankle.

- "When you fell," Joyce began, "did a tree walk on your hand?"

Jane looked at her hand and saw a shoe's mark on it. She hid in her sleeve and placed again the ice on her lip, ignoring the question.

- "You should see a doctor for your ankle," Joyce said, placing ice on it too.

Jane shook her head to say no. She had no insurance, and Constance wasn't earning enough to pay for medical care. Joyce pouted, knowing Jane was lying, but was feeling sorry for her. It was clearly an aggression, and Jane was shaking a lot and avoiding eyes contact, trying to hide the most possible parts of her body. Joyce tried to see where the blood from her tee-shirt was coming from, but Jane rejected her with angry eyes. She didn't want to be touched, she just wanted to disappear for now.

- "Okay, okay, I'm sorry, I just wanted to see if it was a bad wound," Joyce apologized. "I'm...You could maybe call someone? To pick you up? Or, I can call if you want, if you don't wanna talk."

Jane slowly nodded. She composed the phone number of her sister's job and gave the phone to Joyce. The woman had first the secretary of the elementary school and had to wait a moment before finally have her sister. Constance didn't hesitate a second and told Robin she had to leave earlier before going to the store. Jane was still sitting

behind the counter, staring into space. The big sister didn't say anything, she already knew what happened. She walked in front of her little sister, cupped her head, and kissed her forehead. Jane felt the tears coming, but she didn't want to cry in public.

Once at the apartment, Constance sat her sister on the couch and brought more bandages for her ankle.

- "How many were they?" the blonde head asked.

- "Six...maybe more," Jane answered with a small voice.

- "God, what a bunch of piece of shit! I'll call the police!

- "No! I, I don't want to, I don't think they will do it again..."

- "I won't wait for you to be dead to do something! I'll talk to the chief and see what he can do!

Jane didn't insist. Nothing could convince her sister to not do it, and a part of her wanted her to do it.

- "I'll call your headmaster to remedy at this, it can't continue!" Constance angrily told.

- "No, it will be worse...It wasn't even at school, the headmaster can't do anything for this..."

- "I'll still call him to keep an eye! Did they..."

- "What? Raped me?"

Constance nodded.

- "I, I don't think...she...caressed but...no penetration so...I don't know..."

- "This is...fucking abuse!" Constance got angry. "God damn it, what's wrong with people!?"

- "There...there is something else..."

Jane took off her jacket with difficulties and then her tee-shirt. There

were many marks of lipstick on her body and bra, and purple hematomas, but what Constance was seeing more was the word cut in her chest's skin, still bright red. The word « Slut ».

## 32. Confession

Will arrived at the cafeteria, but, this time, he took his lunch, so he went directly to his friends' table. The group greeted him with a big smile.

- "Hey," the young boy said. "What's up?"
- "Jane didn't show up," Lucas stated.
- "He already know, he is in class with us, you remember?" Dustin mocked.
- "Yeah, sorry," the black boy pouted.
- "It's fine, but my mom told me she wasn't okay last Friday, she is probably sick."
- "Yeah, maybe, and with the stress of school, it didn't make it better," Mike answered.
- "Okay, let's talk about something we all want to know," Beverly intervened. "When are we gonna meet Gabrielle? I mean, as your official girlfriend, because we've already seen her in class."
- "Um, well, I don't know, I don't want you to scare her!" Lucas joked.
- "Oh please! Except Max, I don't know who could scare her!" Mike added.

His friends laughed, Dustin nudging the redhead while she was flipping him off with a smile.

- "I'm sure I would be her favorite," Max told.
- "You are everyone's favorite," Lucas said with a mocking tone.
- "Yeah, who doesn't like MadMax!" Dustin stated with a big smile.
- "The poor Mikey who can't beat my highscore," the redhead chuckled.

- "Shut up, it's just a matter of time!"

- "Even time can't help you."

The kids finished their lunch talking about their annoying homework before going to their next period. Will and Max had sport and both thought it wouldn't be the same without Jane. But, when Max arrived on the field, Jane was there, talking with the teacher. She gave him a paper and began to limp out of the field with a crutch. Max ran to her and grabbed her arm to stop her. When Jane turned around, Max noticed her purple hematoma on her lip, red marks on her neck, and bandages around her hands.

- "Shit Jane, what happened to you!?" Max frowned.

- "I fell in the forest," the other girl answered.

- "And a tree sank its nails in your neck!? Do people believe this story!?"

Jane touched her neck like to see if the nails marks were still visible, but if Max saw them, it was visible.

- "I'm sorry..." Max apologized.

- "It's not you."

- "You know it's me. If I, if I hadn't...nothing of this would happen."

- "Maybe it would, you can't know that," Jane said, looking down.

Max wanted to hug her, but she was sure Jane didn't want a hug from her, even if she seemed less mad at her, it was still her fault.

- "Where else are you hurt?"

- "It doesn't matter," Jane told, gritting her teeth.

- "It does, Jane! I know you're mad at me, but it won't stop me from worrying for you," Max stated.

- "I'm fine, I spent the last two days doing nothing on the couch."

- "But—"

- "But nothing! Okay!? I don't wanna talk about it, it's done, there is nothing you can do, so just let me go!" Jane got worked up.

- "Okay, okay, sorry, I didn't want to embarrass you."

Jane nodded and rubbed her face. She was so tired that she was getting angry so fastly, and she was hating her for this.

- "I didn't want to scream", Jane said. "I can't blame you for not wanting everyone to know it was you. It's hell."

- "I don't care what people think of me."

- "If only they could just think..."

- "If...If I knew it would put you in a such situation I wouldn't have done it," Max told with an apologetic tone.

- "Nobody can know before living it... I have to go, as I can't have sport, I have to be in the study room," Jane explained.

Max nodded and let go her hand from Jane's arm. The girl limped out of the field, under her colleague's eyes, still judging her. The redhead didn't know what was wrong with her. During all the conversation, all she wanted to do was to kiss her and hug her tight. Maybe one day it would be possible, the girl was still hoping this.

Baseball was boring without Jane. Will and Max left the field with a bit disappointment for not having their friend with them.

After their last period, Beverly wanted to ask Max something. She noticed her behavior was different since weeks, especially around Jane. She asked her if she was not homophobic, but she still had doubt of Max's answer. She saw her friend in front of her locker and thought it was the best moment.

- "Do you have a problem with Jane's sexuality?" Bev sharply asked.

- "Of course not! Why do you ask that!?" Max frowned.



- "I don't know, you're a bit cold when she is with us, you avoid her, you don't really talk to her like before, and you even look at her with weird eyes, so if it's a problem for you, I need to know."

- "I don't have a problem with Jane, clear?"

- "Yeah, I still don't believe you, there is something weird between you and her," Beverly stated.

- "I'm not homophobic, it's just...complicated..."

- "What's complicated?" the short haired girl insisted.

- "I, I can't tell you..."

- "Why not!?"

Max took a deep breath and looked around. There were too many people, she couldn't tell her here. She grabbed her friend by her wrist and forced her to follow her. She finally found an empty room. The two girls entered in to have their conversation.

- "You remember that Jane kissed a girl, right?" Max began.

- "Is it a real question!?" Bev answered with a raised eyebrow.

- "And you don't remember who stayed to wait Jane because the coach wanted to talk to her?"

- "Um...it was you."

Max looked at Bev like to encourage her to think stronger about the answer. Beverly was nodding, waiting for Max to continue, but suddenly she got a spark and wide opened her eyes.

- "It's you!" Beverly stated. "I mean, the girl she kissed, it's you!"

- "A bit slow but it worked," Max told to herself.

- "That's why you're avoiding her?"

- "Um, I'm not avoiding her, she is a bit mad at me."

- "What? Why? It's not your fault if the coach surprised you! What have you told her!?"

- "What!? Nothing! There is something else...She didn't kiss me..."

- "But you just said she did!?"

- "I did."

Beverly stayed dazed by the revelation. She was a bit lost by all of this and by the tension between the girls.

- "She is mad because...?"

- "She didn't want everyone to know, because, you said it yourself, it's not the first time. And because she is bullied for a kiss she didn't want," Max explained.

- "Oh...She didn't want you to kiss her?" Bev asked with a disappointed tone.

- "I, I don't know...And now, she hates me..."

- "God, I wasn't ready for this! You love her?"

- "I, I have...feelings."

- "Aw, so cute," Beverly widely smiled. "I don't think she hates you."

- "How could you know!?"

- "Because, she is hurt and exposed right now, she is...disappointed by you probably because she is liking you too."

Max never thought of that option. She kinda felt more hopes now and had trouble to hide the smile and the blush growing on her face. Beverly had a bigger smile when she understood how much Max was caring of Jane.

- "You should talk to her," Bev said with a smile.

- "I tried, many times but she is still mad."

- "You should try when you're not at school, it's a dangerous field for Jane. She isolates herself because she is scared."

- "I can try, but not now, she needs time, that's what she said."

Beverly nodded. The two friends left the school to go back to their homes. Max was relieved to finally have told someone, she felt happy to be understood and supported by her best friend.

### 33. Questions

The party and Jane were in Health class. The teacher was talking about having a good life hygiene with a regular physical activity and healthy meals. The party was on the right of the class while Jane was near the window, at the back with Troy, four rows in front of her. She was uncomfortable because she was feeling people's eyes looking at her and wondering what happened to her. She spent the class looking at her desk and trying to calm herself. The period was at more than his half when Clara intervened with a question :

- "I'm sorry, it has nothing to do with that. In fact, I have a question for someone in the class."

- "Well, it's not really the place for your personal question," Mr. Mark told.

- "It's important, I, I don't know a better place to ask it," the brunette insisted.

- "Fine, go on."

Clara, who was on the right of the class, in front of Max and Beverly, turned to the opposite angle of the room.

- "How...how did you know you liked girls?" Clara shyly asked.

Jane, surprised by the question, didn't dare to look up. She knew Clara was asking this to her and thought some people were going to laugh or mock her, but the room was quiet, like if they were all interested.

- "Um...I don't know...it happened, like that," Jane answered, giving quick looks to the class.

- "And...was it hard?"

- "It's still hard..."

- "But, when your family learned about it, did you have problem?"

- "Well, as my sister is my only family, it was okay."
- "And—"
- "How many questions do you have?" Mr. Mark cut.
- "Sorry, I didn't want to...I stop," Clara apologized.
- "It's okay, I think it's interesting, go on."
- "Um, ok. How is it? With a girl?" the brunette shyly continued.
- "How is what?" Jane asked.
- "You know..."
- "Sex? (Clara nods) It...depends of the partner. Why do you want to know all of this?" Jane mumbled, embarrassed to be at the center of the attention.
- "Because, no one else did. They didn't even try to understand you. I mean, those who hurt you, not your friends...(looks down and gulps) I tried to ask you all of this, in the toilets, but you were angry and you thought I was going to mock you like everyone else, and I can't blame you for that...and I think, other girls and boys are like you, and talking about it could help them to accept it."

Jane nodded.

- "Um, did you ever have a girlfriend?"
- "Yes."
- "How many?"
- "Uh...(rubs her face) officialy two but technically one."
- "What!?" a guy in the room frowned.
- "The first one wasn't gay, it was for fun at first, but she didn't dare to tell me she wasn't really in love with me. We still had good moments," Jane explained.

- "Were you? In love?" Clara continued.

- "With her? Kinda..."

- "And with the second one?"

- "Yeah, I was," Jane said with a sad voice.

- "Why did you break up?"

- "We didn't..."

Max felt a pinch in her heart. Was Jane still with her girlfriend and didn't tell anyone? She couldn't believe it and she didn't want to.

- "She...She is dead..." Jane confessed with difficulties feeling the tears coming and her throat tightening.

Max was now feeling stupid. It was selfish to think about herself while Jane was sharing hard stories about herself. And, at these words, the entire class remained silent, their faces faded, waiting for her to continue.

- "How?" Troy softly asked.

Jane looked at the class in the corner of her eyes and all seemed interested by this story. She didn't know if she could tell them, if she was able to tell them. She took a deep breath and began:

- "We...we were walking in the street, doing nothing special. It was her birthday, so we went to the mall to do some shopping. She loved doing shopping, I never understood why she always wanted me to come with her because I hate doing shopping. But it was her birthday, so I made an effort. Anyway, when we were going to my apartment, a group of teens of our school followed us and blocked us in the street where I was living."

She took a moment to calm herself and wipe her face before continuing with her wet eyes :

- "They...they were nine...They separated each other to beat us...I tried, the best I could to fight them but...they were too much...She,

she was screaming and crying, no one came to help us...she looked at me like a last goodbye, like if she knew...and when they were done... (sniffs) they raped her...and forced me to watch..."

All the class was dazed, even the teacher seemed shocked. Jane tried to wipe her tears which were flowing without stopping.

- "If my sister hadn't intervened I would be dead too..."

Max's face paled. She couldn't imagine her life without Jane now and just the idea made her dizzy. She understood better her reaction after the kiss, she was terrified to live that again and it was more than understandable.

- "What was her name?" Beverly asked.

- "Loren..." Jane sniffed, still looking at her desk.

Troy stood and slowly walked to Jane. He stopped behind her and wrapped his arms around the girl, putting his head on her right shoulder. The girl cried more, hiding her face in his left arm.

- "Class is over. You can leave," Mr. Mark told as shocked as his students.

They all stood to leave, letting Jane with Troy in the class. The party met outside, watching at each other with wet eyes, still in shock. They didn't say anything, unable to find the right words. They thought Jane would probably want to be alone and preferred letting her with Troy.

A bit later after their last period, Dustin was walking in the halls to a particular room. The halls were almost empty, majority of the teens on the fields, at the library, at the mall, or at their homes. On his way, he saw Jane, sitting against her locker and looking at a picture. He felt his heart breaking more and couldn't let her like that. He slowly approached her and, when she noticed him, he tried to smile to her. Her eyes were puffy and red, with some tears under. They stared at each other a moment, not knowing what to say. But Dustin thought that she probably didn't want to talk, so he just held out his hand to her.

Jane frowned, not understanding what he wanted, but grabbed it anyway. He helped her to stand and the two friends walked in the halls. They arrived at a room with computers and robots. Jane knew there was a Robotics Club, but she never knew where it was. Dustin explained her he had a project and showed her his robot while explaining how he was working. Even if Jane didn't understand a thing of what he was saying, she enjoyed the moment, changing her mind. She could even try his robot.

Even if he hadn't seen her smiling, he knew she was feeling good in this room. They were alone, a bit isolated from the school life, allowing the girl to empty her hurt mind.



### 34. The visit

Mike gave Max Jane's address. The redhead took the bus to finally arrive in front of what seemed like her apartment. She knocked and heard footsteps coming to her. The door opened and the redhead saw Jane's big sister.

- "What do you want?" Constance asked with a frown.

- "Um, Jane wasn't here today, I wanted to see how she was," Max answered.

- "She is sad."

- "Yeah, I can imagine...Can I see her? Or you're gonna let me stay here?"

Constance took a moment to examine the teen in front of her before opening a bit more the door. Max entered slowly, discovering the apartment. She recognised Jane's green BMX on the right and couldn't hold a smile. She arrived between two doors, Sex Pistols at her right and Pink Floyd at her left. Constance was still behind her, looking at her with strict eyes.

- "Do you have a problem with me?" Max frowned.

- "No, I just wanna be sure you won't be lost," Constance answered, crossing her arms.

- "In a corridor!?"

- "It's a long corridor."

- "No, not really."

Constance rolled her eyes and opened the SexPistols' door.

- "Why do you have to choose the sassiest one!?" the blonde teen told in the room.

- "I didn't choose," Jane answered.

Constance shook her head and let Max enter the room. She told her little sister she was going to work before closing the door.

Max took a look to the room. On the continuity of the door, on the right, was an old and maltreated boxing bag with black gloves on it, then her desk with school books, notebooks, papers, and more school things. On her left was a heap of clothes with dirty shoes for trek and her bike protections. In the left angle was a grey electric guitar, on the right a high turquoise wardrobe, a white nightstand with a lamp and diverse objects, but especially the bracelet she offered her during the scholar trip, and finally the bed on the opposite angle. Jane was laying down on it, holding a Teddy bear, her back turned to the window behind her. The walls were blue with lots of posters on them.

Max went to the bed, looking at the room with a smirk. She was in Jane's world. She sat on the bed, between Jane and the wall and admired the desk in front of her. Her khaki backpack was on the floor, half opened, her leather jacket was on the chair, and on the desk was a small rainbow flag in a pencil case. She had a wastebasket in the shape of a basket of basketball and a baseball bat next to it, leaned on the wall with a glove and an old ball on the floor. Under the desk was a box with many music tapes.

- "Make yourself home," Jane sarcastically mumbled.

- "That's what I do," Max answered.

Jane had a small chuckle but was still looking at her door. Max noticed her red puffy eyes, she had probably cried all day because of the day before.

- "How are you?" the redhead softly asked.

- "Dunno."

Max pouted. She could tell her she was sorry, but it wouldn't change anything.

- "I'm sorry..." Jane whispered with a small voice.

- "Why, why are you sorry?" Max asked.

- "Because, I made you believe it was your fault, but it's not you who hurt me..."

- "Jane, you were scared, and I had no rights to expose you like that."

- "I treated you like shit," Jane stated with an upset tone. "You didn't deserve that."

- "Well, you didn't deserve to be treated like everyone treated you and you didn't deserve everything that happened to you, so...I'm not the one to complain. I can handle your bad temper."

- "I'm still sorry..."

- "And I forgive you, don't torture yourself for this," Max reassured. "I like your room by the way."

- "Oh, really?" Jane sniffed.

- "Yeah, it's your universe!"

- "A messy universe."

- "I still like it."

Max turned to Jane who was still sad. The redhead took support on her hands and laid down before rolling on her right side.

- "Don't panic, but I'm going to put my hand on your soulder, is it okay?" Max told.

Jane turned her head a bit to see Max and looked at her with folded eyes.

- "Are you mocking me ?" Jane asked.

- "...Maybe..." the redhead answered with wide opened eyes.

Jane playfully rolled her eyes and watched again her door.

- "Okay, I allow you to touch my shoulder."

Max smiled and placed her hand on her friend's shoulder. The

redhead felt stupid, her heart was still racing and she thought it wasn't really the moment, and she was scared that Jane could hear it. She was stressing because she didn't want to embarrass Jane again, she didn't want to ruin everything again. Jane slowly turned on her back, looking at Max.

- "You're into girls or not?" Jane seriously asked.

- "Um...I, I don't know..."

Jane pouted. She was disappointed, she hoped to have a chance with the redhead, but she was straight, and she knew it since the beginning.

- "But," Max continued, "I think I like you, a bit more than the others."

Jane's face lighted. She tried to hide her happiness and relief, but her smile was too big.

- "I missed this," the redhead softly told.

- "What ?" Jane frowned.

- "Your smile."

Jane bit her bottom lip this time. Even if she thought it was a bit cheesy, it was a long time someone didn't say something so nice and cute. She liked seeing Max cheesy, she was so rough and tough usually, a bit tenderness was cute.

Max's smile slowly faded when she thought about Jane's past, it was so heart breaking to know that people like them were hurting other persons just for this. It was unfair.

- "You okay?" Jane asked with a concerned tone.

- "Yeah...I'm sorry for...what happened to you."

Jane nodded.

- "Sometimes, I wonder what would have happened if I had fought more..."

- "Jane, they were nine, and I'm sure you couldn't fight more than you did," Max said.

- "Maybe..." Jane answered, not really believing it.

- "You're karaté kid, I'm sure you gave all of you."

- "I'm more karaté kicked than karaté kid," Jane joked with a serious tone.

- "I don't know if I can laugh or not," Max smiled with a frown.

Jane tried to keep her serious but Max's confused face made her laugh too much. The redhead accompanied her friend, a bit relieved that she wasn't serious.

- "You come tomorrow?"

- "Yes, I've missed enough class like that," Jane sighed.

- "Cool," Max smiled. "You still can't do sport?"

- "Nope, one more week," the girl answered, raising her leg.

The two girls stopped talking. They just stared at each other with stars in their eyes. Max wanted to kiss her again, but the story with her ex seemed to be too present, and Jane seemed not ready for a new relationship. She was going to take her time and charmed her slower. She wanted to do it correctly this time.

- "I don't want to ruin this moment, but I have some homework for you," Max said.

- "Fine," Jane pouted a bit disappointed.

The two girls sat on the bed, and Max showed her what they've done in class. Even if she managed to control her racing heart, she was sure she was all red by the heat she was feeling inside her. And she was sure Jane was feeling the same, her cheeks were pink, and she was always smiling when she was looking at her.

## 35. Chest

It was early in the morning. People were slowly waking up to go to work while the sun was trying to show up. Jane was coming back to her apartment. When she entered, her sister was already awake, waiting for her for the breakfast.

- "Nice walk?" Constance asked, placing cereals on the table.
- "Not bad, I like when it's cold," Jane answered. "I can't wait to run again!"
- "Yeah, I believe you," the teen chuckled. "How was it yesterday?"
- "How was what?" the young girl frowned.
- "You know, with...your friend."
- "Max ? Um, normal, I guess."
- "So, you don't like her?"
- "I do ! But...I don't know. I'm not ready..."
- "Bullshits ! You are ready, you're just scared," Constance stated.
- "I, I still think of her, I mean, it's not fair for Max..."
- "It's been almost two years, you don't think it's time?"

Jane bit her left bottom lip to hold her tears. She spent the last days crying and thought she was empty now, but apparently not.

- "Do we have to talk about it now?" Jane asked with a small voice.
- "Yes, you know why? Because Max is sassy and probably stubborn, if she likes you, she won't give up."

Jane had a small chuckle. Constance met her twice and she already identified the subject.

- "I feel horrible..."

- "Why?" the blonde teen frowned.

- "Because...it's like I'm cheating on her," Jane confessed with a tear falling on her cheek.

- "Oh...But, you had other girlfriends after her, right?"

- "No, I mean, it wasn't for...feelings," Jane said, looking away of embarrassment.

- "Ugh, ok, an information I would have preferred not having. What's different now?"

Jane opened her mouth but no sounds came. She was desperately looking around like if the right answer was hidden in her kitchen.

- "You have feelings now, right?" Constance asked with a raised eyebrow.

- "...I think I do..."

- "Okay, it's the real problem. Listen, what happened two years ago, should have never happened, it is tragic. But it shouldn't stop you to have feelings for another girl. You forbid yourself to live because you think you shouldn't have survived to this. I'm sorry to tell you, but you did! I don't ask you to forget her, but punishing you for something which is not even your fault, won't bring her back."

- "I know," Jane said, crying more.

- "Good, you can take your time. Max heard your story, I'm sure she won't put pressure on you in any way," Constance softly smiled, wiping her little sister's face. "Now go take your shower, or you'll be late for school."

Jane nodded and smiled to her. Her sister always had good advice for her, it was why she had a blind trust in her and was feeling safe to talk about her emotions with her.

While Max was at her locker, Beverly approached her with a big smirk on her face. Max looked at her with a frown, not knowing what she had in her mind.

- "Yes?" Max said.
- "How was yesterday?" Beverly asked.
- "Oh, I understand better your happiness, but nothing special happened."
- "You didn't ask her out!?"
- "Of course not!"
- "Why not!?"
- "Because, she just told us about her dead girlfriend, I wasn't going to invite her the day after," Max explained with her voice down.
- "You didn't try anything!?"
- "No! I don't even know how to flirt with a girl, do you know how to flirt with a girl?"
- "No, but Jane probably knows."
- "I won't ask the girl I want to flirt with how to flirt with her! It doesn't make sense!"
- "I know! I just wanted you to understand that I was useless for this," Bev explained. "How was she?"
- "Sad," sighed Max. "And...lost."
- "It's normal, but she will be better, don't worry. Give her some time."
- "Said the girl who wanted me to ask her out," Max joked.
- "A miracle could have happened!" Beverly chuckled.

Max gently pushed her friend before taking her books from her locker. A bit farther in the hall, Jane was arriving to her locker, placing her crutch against it. When she opened it, the nightmare of the papers came back. She crouched on her left leg and picked them up. What was written on them was worse than she imagined. « Those



boys were heroes, you and your monster girlfriend deserved it! », « You should have died too! », « Eradicate the vermin! », « Your girlfriend was a slut, she got what she deserved! », « I'll rape you to finish their work! », « You're dead! », and more. She began to feel dizzy, like if the ground was disappearing under her. She tensed her hands on the papers with an angry breathing. How could people call those rapists and killers, heroes!? It was insane! She just lost more faith in humanity.

- "Hey Jane," Lucas greeted, placing his hand on his friend's shoulder.

The young girl turned her head and met his eyes. The young boy had seen what she had in her hands and decided to intervene.

- "Give me that, I'll take care of it," Lucas told with a soft smile.

Jane had a last look to the papers before holding them out to her friend.

- "Don't read them, please," Jane said.

Lucas took them, nodded, and put them in his bag. Jane was feeling ashamed. No matter what, people would hate her for who she was. She didn't know what to do to stop all of this, to finally live peacefully. It was a never ended war.

- "Did Max gave you the paper? For Mechanics ?" Lucas asked.

- "Um, yeah," Jane answered.

- "He forgot to give it to us on class. I put notes on it, did you see it?"

- "Yeah, we tried to decipher it."

- "Decipher?" Lucas frowned.

- "You have an horrible handwriting," Jane calmly stated.

- "Max has an horrible influence on you," Lucas joked with a serious tone.

Jane had a small smirk and bit her bottom lip on her right. Lucas

chuckled to show he was joking, but Jane didn't laugh more, the smirk was the best she could do. They were joined by Dustin, wrapping his arms around them to salute them, and the two girls, Bev and Max. While the others were talking, Jane and Max were in a deep exchange of looks. The redhead moved from between Lucas and Beverly to between Lucas and Jane, wanting to talk to the girl. As the three others began a debate about their English's exercise, she was alone with Jane.

- "Are you okay?" Max asked. "You look sad, did something happen?"

- "Nothing more than usual," Jane answered, looking down.

- "Hey, (gently grabbs her hand) you know you can talk to me, right?"

Max rubbed her friend's hand and realised it was maybe not a good idea to do this in the hall where everyone could see them. She quickly removed it, like if it was burning. The two girls were a bit blushing, not daring to look at each other. Max wanted to hold Jane's hand way longer.

- "Sorry," Max mumbled, tucking her hair behind her ears.

- "It's, it's okay," Jane frowned, biting her lip. "(clears her throat) Thank you, for coming yesterday. Even if, I wasn't really (makes movements with her hand at the level of her head) in the mood, it changed my mind."

- "No problem, when you want," the redhead smiled.

Max's heat increased so rapidly that she thought she had a brutal fever! But she couldn't detach her eyes from Jane, from her lips. She wondered if it wasn't just a big attraction than love, technically, she didn't really know the difference. She began to worry about her feelings and looked down. While she was trying to figure out, she noticed that Jane was wearing again the bracelet she bought her and couldn't hold a smile.

- "Hey Jane!" Abigail called followed by Alban and other teens. "How is your chest?"

The others watched the teens walking far from them before turning

to Jane. The young girl was staring into space with wide opened eyes, her hand on her chest, tensing her tee-shirt.

- "What's wrong with your chest?" Dustin frowned.

- "Nothing," Jane answered too quickly.

Jane was again in the forest. She was seeing Alban, forcing her to shut up, almost choking her, and Abigail, topping her with her blade and...kissing her with her moist and dirty lips, grabbing her...brutally while the others were blocking her against the floor, not able to move to defend herself.

- "Jane?" Max called.

The redhead placed her hand on Jane's arm, but the girl had a defensive start and hit the lockers behind her, still staring into space.

- "Jane, did Abigail hurt you?" Lucas asked with a concerned tone.

Jane was still staring into space but was slowly coming back.

- "I have to go, I don't wanna be late, see you," Jane said.

She took her crutch and her bag and limped to her class under her friends' lost eyes.

- "She doesn't seem okay," Dustin stated.

- "She doesn't seem okay!? She was shaking more than someone who has Parkinson! She was more than not okay!" Beverly told with anger.

- "I'm gonna kick their ass at those assholes!" Max intervened, gritting her teeth.

- "We have to find out what happened, they could do it again!" Lucas said. "She was already feeling bad because of the papers..."

- "She got more!?" Bev asked with a shocked and disappointed tone.

- "Yeah, she was reading them when I arrived, I took them."

- "Show me."

- "Um...no."

- "What!? Why!?"

- "She doesn't want us to read what's on them."

- "But it's to help her! It's not because we are curious or whatever! It's probably Abigail and Alban who gave her majority of this damn papers!" Beverly explained.

- "Fine! (searches on his bag and gives the papers to Bev) But I don't stay here, she asked me to not read them, so I won't read them," Lucas said with an upset tone. "I go to class, see you."

They watched him walking away. Beverly was holding tight the papers, not really sure if she wanted to read them or not. She turned them, Dustin and Max above each of her shoulders, and began to read. After four papers, Max preferred looking away. Jane was feeling enough guilty about what happened with her ex-girlfriend, she didn't need those dickheads to make it worse!

- "Oh god...it's awful," Dustin stated.

- "People are heartless," Beverly added.

The teens didn't have the time to tell more that the bell rang, forcing them to run to their classes. Max couldn't stop thinking of those words that Jane was reading everyday, and now they were using a sad and traumatic story she painfully but bravely shared, against her. It was pathetic! She was already hating Abigail and all her lapdogs, but now it was worse!

As usual, Jane avoided everyone during the breaks and changeover. The party was at the cafeteria table, all looking around to locate their friend.

- "Maybe she is not eating here," Lucas pouted.

- "Maybe she is not eating at all!" Beverly told.

- "Don't be dramatic," Dustin sighed.

- "I'm not dramatic! People who are sad and depressed stop eating, most of the time!"

- "She is in line, calm down," Will reassured.

- "Jane is strong," Mike said.

- "But she still has feelings and nobody seems to care!" Bev continued.

- "We do! Can you stop doing a scene!? It's like you're blaming us!"

- "No, of course not, I wasn't thinking of you, of course you care about her, I'm sorry..."

- "It's fine," Mike reassured.

- "Do you think she will eat with us?" Max asked, still watching Jane.

The teens looked at each other with a pout, not sure if she would come. Jane was feeling the others eyes on her. She wondered if Abigail and Alban hadn't bragged for what happened in the forest. It was like if they were all looking at her chest to read what was on it. Constance told her it wasn't very deep, it would disappear with the time. But in Jane's mind, it would never disappear, she was sure everyone could read it now, even if she had a tee-shirt.

- "You're paranoid! " Jane thought.

She shook her head and grabbed her sheriff star pendant to calm her. She tried to get a regular breathing and to think about reassuring things, as her sister taught her. She took her tray in a hand and her crutch in her other hand, looking for an empty table.

The party was in a hard debate to know in which movie Harrison Ford had the best character when Will noticed that Jane sitting alone again far from them.

- "Follow me guys," Will said.

The others didn't stop their debate and followed their friend without knowing where they were going. When they saw Jane, they understood and all sat around her, continuing their debate.

- "I mean, Han Solo is the best character ever!" Mike told, sitting next to Jane.

Jane started and looked at them sitting while they were talking. Lucas, Beverly, and Will in front of her, Dustin and Mike at her right, and Max at her left.

- "Indiana Jones is way better! He is so annoying in Han Solo," Beverly stated.

- "No! How can you say that!?" Dustin intervened.

- "Jane, what do you think?" Max asked.

Jane was so focus on listening them that she needed a second to realise they were talking to her.

- "Um...I'm not a big fan of Harrison Ford and I don't really like Star Wars so..."

- "WHAT!?" the entire table got shocked.

- "You don't like Star Wars!? How is it even possible!?" Dustin told with a disappointed tone.

- "Space is not really my...kind of universe," Jane pouted.

- "But Star Wars! Everybody loves Star Wars!"

- "Not me! I fell asleep at the movie theater."

- "You fel- I can't believe it, you are joking, you can't fall asleep in front of a movie like that!"

- "I did, three times!"

- "Why seeing the two next if you didn't like the first one?" Beverly frowned.

- "I wasn't going to let my sister go to the movie theater alone, it's pretty sad."

- "Many people go to the movie theater alone," Max stated.

- "Well, I guess I just wanted to spend time with her."
- "By sleeping?" Lucas frowned.
- "I was still there!"
- "Paying a ticket for you to sleep is the worse thing I ever heard," Dustin told.
- "In fact, we were sneaking out," Jane smirked.
- "Really?" Will smiled.
- "Constance likes charming girls, it wasn't really hard with this one, she always let us pass."
- "She is lesbian too?"
- "Yeah, a family thing apparently."

The teens chuckled which made smile Jane. She was glad to have them, they were the support she needed now. Thanks to them, she managed to change her mind by talking about movies or her sister. And Max couldn't stop smiling to her. She immediately felt better.

## 36. Shopping

Max was in the bus. It was Saturday and, as she stopped basket-ball, she had more free time. She wasn't sure of what she was doing, maybe it was a bad idea, and she would just be ridiculous. She spent her ride hesitating to go back and forget this idea, but she would hate her for this. She arrived in front of the door and knocked. A blonde young woman opened her.

- "Oh, the sassy kisser," Constance stated.

- "You know I have a name, right?"

- "Yeah, sassy Max."

- "I prefer MadMax, it's way cooler."

- "No, I'm way cooler."

- "Are you annoying with every Jane's friend?" Max frowned.

- "With every people who can break her heart, yes," Constance answered.

Max nodded and pinched her lips together. Apparently Jane's sister wasn't really liking her, but she wasn't surprised, adults didn't really like her. But she was surprised by her, opening more the door and inviting her to enter. Maybe she wasn't really hating her.

- "She is kinda busy now, you can wait in the kitchen," Constance told.

Max thanked her and entered. She went to the kitchen for the first time and watched the polaroids on the fridge. She had a small smile when she saw the small Jane evolving to the tall Jane she knew.

- "You like those pictures?" Constance asked with the same serious tone.

- "Um, yeah, I mean, she looks cute on them," Max said with a smile. "She did boxing?"



- "Hell yeah she did! She still does. And other combat sports, of course."

- "She is karaté kid."

- "Nah, she is better."

- "I won't tell you the contrary, I saw her at the skatepark, it was the most badass thing I had never seen in my life!" Max said with enthusiasm. "You both seem really close, it's really cool."

- "Yeah, we are," Constance softly smiled. "Okay, enough pictures for today, sit now."

- "How can I resist to such a nice offer," Max sarcastically answered.

Constance rolled her eyes. Max had a small proud smile. Jane's sister seemed receptive to sarcasm and to not hate her, it was a good thing. She took a moment to watch around her. Behind her was two pieces of furniture with books on them. It was books of psychology, especially child's psychology and teens' psychology. Constance was pretty young, she probably took care of Jane at a too young age, but she did it well apparently, she had nothing to blame herself. She saw board games, Jane told her she was spending her Saturday nights with her sister by playing games. Her investigation had been cut by the sound of a flush. So, this was where Jane was. She turned to the corridor -Constance leaned on the wall of the kitchen- waiting for her friend. The door slammed and footsteps approached.

- "God! I don't know what smell worse between my shit and my armp- Oh hi Max!"

Jane stopped a moment, not really ready to see her crush in her kitchen, and became red of embarrassment. She was wearing a white tank top with no bra -which wasn't bothering Max- and a khaki short. She had a big bandage on her chest. The redhead had an amused frown while Jane was trying to find something to say, wiping her hands on her tee-shirt.

- "(turns to her sister) Thanks for telling me," she said between her teeth.

- "I didn't know you were going to make a comparison of your body's smells! And, you know there is a towel in the toilets, right?"

- "Yeah, I know!"

- "Why are you washing your hands on you! You're wearing a white tank top which became a bit transparent, embarrassing me because I don't wanna see this and forcing Max to focus really hard to not watch what's under."

Jane and Constance both turned to Max who was a bit biting her bottom lip, while she was burning inside. Jane had an amused smile and kinda let her watch it.

- "Did I miss something at school?" Jane frowned.

- "What? Oh no, no, why do you think that?" Max answered, all red.

- "I don't know, why are you here then?"

- "I wanted to know if you wanted to go to the mall with me."

- "Really?" Jane smiled.

She turned to her sister like to ask her.

- "Do what you want, I work all day, just don't be late at yours," the blonde teen said.

- "Okay, cool," Jane smiled more. "I...get ready and then we can go, if you have not ran away because of my creepy sister."

- "I'm not creepy!"

- "Mike was so uncomfortable last time, I'm sure he won't come back," Jane chuckled.

- "Mike is scared of his own shadow, I don't think it's a good example," Max joked.

- "See!" Constance supported, pointing at the redhead with her hand.

- "I'm sure he is braver than he looks."

- "If you want," Max smiled.

- "(nods) I come back," Jane said.

She was going to her room when she stopped in the corridor and turned to her sister, the wall hiding her from Max.

- "What should I wear?" Jane asked with her voice down.

- "Clothes," Constance answered.

- "What kind?"

- "Begin with a bra, then you will get it."

- "You're not helping."

Constance stood from the wall she was leaned against and joined her sister.

- "It's not a date, just a hang out, just wear your clothes, she is not in a suit or a big dress!" Constance explained.

- "Okay, okay, thank you."

- "And don't forget to put deodorant!"

- "Yeah I know, I don't want to asphyxiate her!"

Constance smiled and watched her sister going to her room to get ready before going back in the kitchen with her guest. Max was watching the pictures which were hid under the books.

- "You're a nosy," Constance stated.

Max started and turned around, feeling she did something bad.

- "I'm just...curious," Max answered. "Sorry..."

- "It's okay, it's just pictures."

- "Is it your parents?" Max shyly asked, showing a picture of a man and a woman with a small Constance between them.

- "Yep. I won't give you details if that's what you want."

- "I wasn't going to ask anything, it's private."

Max kept watching some pictures. She found one with Jane wearing a suit and another where she wore a short green dress. She smiled more, Jane was looking great in both pictures which made bubbling the redhead's stomach. Jane appeared in the corridor, ready to go. She was wearing her black boots, black jeans, a red Sex Pistols tee-shirt, her leather jacket without spikes, her necklace, some rings, her khaki backpack, but most importantly, the bracelet that Max gave her. Her hair was free, the line on her right side. Max took a moment to admire her before asking:

- "You're ready?"

- "Yep," Jane answered. "What are you doing?"

- "Just watching you wearing a dress."

- "Oh god, (approaches and looks at the picture) it's probably the last time I wore a dress," Jane chuckled.

- "You look great, what happened to this dress?" Max asked.

- "She is probably in the dark side of my wardrobe," Jane smiled.

Max giggled and put again the pictures on the furniture. She looked at her friend and couldn't look away. They both stared at each other, Max feeling her cheeks becoming pink. The redhead's eyes took a moment to look closely to the girl next to her. She watched her eyes, those round and brown eyes with kindness inside, her small nose, Max liked her small nose, she thought it was cute, her skin, beautiful skin, and her lips, her soft lips she already tasted and wanted to taste again. The stare was cut by Constance clearing loudly her throat on purpose. The two girls started and looked at the teen.

- "You weren't supposed to go to the mall!?" Constance sharply asked.

- "We are leaving," Jane answered.

Jane made a movement with her head to invite Max to follow her.

The two girls were in front of the apartment when Jane realised she forgot something. She went back inside and took her big sister in her arms for a big hug.

- "I love you," Jane said.

- "I love you too," Constance smiled.

They stayed a moment like that before breaking the hug. The blonde teen kissed her sister on her head and held out the crutch to her. Jane took it, thanked her, and joined Max who was waiting outside.

- "Did you just went back inside to hug your sister?" Max frowned.

- "Um...yes," Jane answered, wondering if the redhead was finding it stupid.

- "That's really cute."

Jane had a relieved smile. She took her bag and her crutch, and the two girls could finally go to the mall.

- "You won't be...um...embarrassed, to go to the mall with me?" Jane asked.

- "What!? Of course not," Max frowned.

- "Ok...You're not scared that people could bother you because of me?"

- "Mmmh, no," the redhead shrugged.

- "But-"

- "Listen, Jane, I didn't ask you to come with me to the mall because you were the only person free, I asked you because I want to spend the day with you, that's all. I know you are scared, but people at the mall don't care about you, I mean, they don't know you, they don't know you're gay, and they won't know. It's not high school."

Jane pinched her lips together and nodded. Max seemed very confident, it was probably because she had never been beaten up

before. Or maybe she had been? She didn't know, she hoped she had never been, she didn't deserve it. They entered in the bus and chose two seats in the middle of the bus. The teens around seemed all excited to go to the mall. Jane took the seat near the window to watch the landscape. After a moment, she turned to Max who was looking at her with a smile.

- "Why are you looking at me like that?" Jane asked with a smile.

- "Oh, for nothing in particular," Max pouted.

- "Okay," Jane nodded. "Can I ask you something?"

- "Sure, go on."

Jane looked around to be sure no one was listening before approaching the other girl's ear.

- "Is it a date?" Jane murmured.

Max wide opened her eyes. She didn't expect Jane to be so direct!

- "Um...I...uh...Do you, do you want it to be?" Max asked with a tensed smile.

- "I don't know, it's maybe too early for you."

- "What!? I thought it was too early for you!"

- "For me!?" Jane frowned. "I'm like that since years now, but you...you still don't know."

- "No, I wasn't referring to that..."

Jane frowned to think. She was watching again the week she just spent. When she arrived to the health class, her face relaxed. She understood what Max meant now, and thought it was really kind to not press her with that.

- "I'm...I'm trying to move on. The right way this time," Jane answered.

- "The right way?"

- "You don't need to know that, it's not happy stories and...I'm not very proud of this."

Max watched the girl without insisting. Maybe she had drugs issues!? Or problem with alcohol!? Maybe she robbed many shops and maybe a bank!?

- "Don't stress yourself with my question," Jane reassured. "I was just wondering, we are just going to have fun at the mall, that's all."

- "Yeah, okay," Max smiled.

The bus arrived in front of the mall and the two girls half ran outside. Max grabbed Jane's arm of excitement while the other girl was looking at the building with worried eyes.

- "Hey, are you okay?" Max softly asked.

- "Yeah," Jane gulped. "It's just, there are lots of people, that's all."

- "Don't worry, I won't let you down," the redhead reassured with a smile. "Come on, it's gonna be fun! And you're karaté kid, a kick and no one will bother you."

Jane wasn't sure of that, but Max's excitement was contagious, she couldn't hold her smile. Max put her arm under Jane's one and brought the girl inside. Jane looked around to watch the different shops while Max was walking to the escalator. The redhead was on the step in front of Jane, to be taller than her for once, without being too far from her, with a hand on her shoulder.

- "I know you hate doing shopping," Max began, "but I'm sure there are shops made for you."

- "Um, okay, I follow you," Jane smiled.

- "How is your ankle? Does it still hurt?"

- "No, not that much, I took the crutch just in case."

- "Cool, I can't wait to see you again in sport."

Jane nodded. Max really seemed happy to be here with her which was warming her heart. Max couldn't be happier, she was finally having a moment with Jane, and a long one. Jane was so sad those last days, she wanted her to spend a day without crying. She slowly travelled her hand from Jane's shoulder to her soft cheek and gently caressed it with her thumb. Max was so lost into the other girl's eyes that she almost fell when she arrived at the top of the escalator. Jane openly mocked her which made laugh the redhead too. After calming down, Max brought Jane in front of a clothes' shop. Jane thought it was a normal shop with normal clothes, but when she looked closer, she noticed it was all Rock style. Max looked at Jane's surprised face and felt proud of her.

- "Told you there were shops made for you," Max smiled.

The redhead didn't wait more and went inside with Jane. Jane didn't know where to look, there were so many leather jackets, jeans, boots, and more! She wanted to buy everything!

- "Why have I never seen this shop before!?" Jane asked with her mouth and eyes wide opened.

- "It's a big mall, you don't know all the shops which are here," Max shrugged. "What do you wanna try?"

- "Everything! Look at those boots, they are brighting! And this jacket, (sniffs) it smells good, and those tee-shirts! All my favorite bands! (takes one and shows to Max) Sex Pistols! Metallica, Steppenwolf, Queen, Slayer, Kiss, Iron Maiden! Oh! A Pink Floyd tee-shirt, I need to take one for my sister."

Jane looked at the price and almost collapsed. She searched her how much she had. Ten dollars, it wasn't enough.

- "I'm gonna pay," Max said, seeing Jane's disappointed face.

- "No, no, it's okay, she...she doesn't need a new tee-shirt..." Jane answered.

- "Don't be stupid Jane, today, I invite you, which means I'm the one



who pays and if you absolutely want to pay your sister's tee-shirt, you can pay me later."

- "I don't want you to ruin yourself for me."

- "Jane, I've taken enough money to buy you things, I knew where I was going to bring you, I knew the prices, and I knew you would love everything so, you look, you try, and you let me pay, okay?"

- "...Why?"

- "I want you to have a good day," Max shrugged like if it was nothing. "So now enjoy! This is your day!"

- "What can I do to thank you?"

- "Just enjoy Jane, that's all I want."

If Jane had listened to herself, she would have jumped in her arms and kissed her. But the people around her deterred her, she just wanted to have a normal day where nobody was insulting her or punching her. She chose a bunch of tee-shirts and jeans and went to the dressing room. She tried six tee-shirts and four jeans and, as Max said :

- "Everything fits you, it's tiring!"

Jane blushed at the compliment before proposing the redhead to try some clothes with her. Max found herself trying some clothes with Jane.

- "Look how cool we look," Jane stated.

Max couldn't tell the contrary, those red and black suspenders were looking good with her black outfit. She noticed in the mirror that Jane had her head turned to her, and was looking at her with a soft smile and heart in her eyes. Max began to admire Jane through the mirror and had a pleasant shiver in her neck. They were looking at each other without looking at each other.

Jane chose two tee-shirts, the tee-shirt for her sister, a pair of blue jeans, the suspenders that Max tried, and a jeans jacket with no

sleeves but with spikes on it. She didn't want to take too much because Max was paying everything. She was so generous she couldn't believe it! And just for her, she was feeling privileged, and she was liking it.

- "What do you wanna eat?" Max asked holding Jane's shopping bags.

- "It doesn't matter, you don't want me to hold a bag?" Jane quickly answered.

- "I'm fine, there are only two, I can do it."

- "Okay, but I could take one, I mean, it's all for me."

- "Indeed, it's for you, I offer you this so I'll give it to you when we separate, and don't try to convince me otherwise because you have no chance."

- "Okay," Jane chuckled.

The two girls arrived at the last floor where all the restaurants and fast food were. Jane watched each places around her. She had already been in a mall, but she was always surprised to see so many shops in the same place.

Max looked at Jane with a smile. Jane was like a child discovering life and the world outside, it was really cute.

- "So? What's your favorite?" Max asked again, showing the place with her arms.

- "Um..."

McDonalds? No, she always chose McDonalds. Burger King? No, not her favorite. The cafeteria? She liked it, but there were too many people. Maybe...

- "We could take a burrito, if you want," Jane shyly said.

- "I love burritos," the redhead smiled. "Let's go!"

They bought their burritos, french fries, and drinks and sat on a

bench on the third floor, watching the life around them.

- "Can I ask you something?" Max said.

- "Um, yes, (swallows) I don't promise to answer you but you can try," Jane answered.

- "Okay, um...how was it, the first time you met your sister?"

- "Oh," Jane smirked, touching the top of her head. "Um, it was weird at first, I mean, she was no one for me, I didn't know she was existing. I was scared of her, I mean, she was an adult and me just a child! My confidence was very low, even underground, and I thought she was a new...problem. But she was so happy to learn she had a sister that after an hour, I was totally fine and comfortable with her, and I don't regret it. Why do you ask me that?"

- "I don't know, I like your bond with her."

And because Jane seemed to have a lot of bad memories, but everytime she was talking about her sister she was smiling with sparkling eyes.

- "You don't have brothers and sisters?" Jane said.

- "No," Max pouted. "A step-brother, that's enough."

- "You're not close to him apparently."

- "No, not really, he is...difficult and angry like, always angry."

- "Is he violent? Did he hit you?" Jane frowned with a quick tone.

- "No, no, it's okay, he has left since a moment now."

- "Okay, okay, good, good."

- "Hey, don't collapse, I don't think he will come back," Max chuckled to reassure her friend. "And I've learned to defend myself, I can beat him if I want."

- "Yeah...sometimes it's not enough..."

Jane got lost in her thoughts, staring into space. She knew how to fight and defend herself but last time with Abigail, Alban, and the others, she wasn't able to do it, and was scared it could happen again!

- "Jane? Are you okay?" Max asked with a concerned tone.

- "What? Oh yeah, (touches her chest) I'm fine," Jane answered with a weak smile. "You don't mind if we go to my apartment before I go to work? To put my new stuff in my room?"

- "No, of course not. We can take an ice cream and take the bus."

Jane nodded. The two girls stood, took two ice creams -hazelnut and cherry for Jane and strawberry for Max- and went in the bus.

They arrived in the apartment, and Jane went directly in her room to put the shopping bags. Max enjoyed this moment to watch closely the pictures on the fridge.

- "Jane?"

- "Yeah?"

- "You had short hair?"

Jane, still in her room, wide opened her eyes and began to stress. For a second, she forgot which pictures were on the fridge. She slowly went back to her kitchen, watching above Max's shoulder. The redhead felt Jane's breathing in her shoulder and wanted to plunge her face in her neck.

- "Um...yeah..." Jane said with a shaking voice.

- "You don't have to answer all my curious questions, if you don't want to talk about it, just don't," Max reassured, noticing Jane's embarrassment.

- "Yeah, okay, I won't give details."

Max turned her head to watch Jane. The girl was at just a few centimeters from her crush and felt her breathing becoming heavier, faster, like if...she was in love. But she wanted to do correctly the

thing, she didn't want to jump on her like last time.

- "Can I ask you something?"

- "You spent your day asking me that," Jane chuckled, "just go on."

- "Um...I don't know how to ask you that...and you will probably say no..."

- "Try, you could be surprised."

- "Would you...I don't know...come on a date, with me? Maybe?" Max shyly asked, looking away.

Jane had a big smile on her face. First because now she was sure Max was into her -even if she told her she had still a doubt- and secondly because Max seemed so stressed that Jane could say no, her who was usually so confident.

- "Can you answer? It's a bit long and I don't know how many times I can support that."

- "Um, I would love to," Jane smiled.

Her smile faded to let appear a worried frown on her face. She saw again her ex's death and Abigail, Alban and the others, the small papers in her locker, the insults on it and on the walls, the assault in the forest and she didn't want to take that risk.

- "But...uh...I don't know," Jane continued.

- "What's wrong?" Max frowned.

- "Um...I...I just can't..."

- "Hey, (turns to her) it's okay, you're not ready, it's too early and to be fair, I'm not sure I'm ready too, we don't have to."

- "But I want to! It's just...too many things...if some people of the school see us, everybody will know, and you will be mocked and insulted and worse and-"

- "Okay!" Max cut. "Calm down, I don't want to force you, I mean, you're clearly stressing, and I understand, if you don't want, you don't want. It's fine."

- "No, it's not fine," Jane angrily sighed, rubbing her face. "I can't spend the end of my life like that..."

- "I hope not! I still want my date!" Max joked.

Jane had a small chuckle.

- "Or," the redhead began, "we could maybe, secretly date."

- "Uh...explain," Jane said.

- "We could see each other, like today, doing what friends do, having fun and things like that, and if we need to go further...we could go to a neutral place."

- "Where?"

- "I don't know, I was thinking of my room, I mean, when Neil is in a professional trip, my mom won't bother us."

- "Okay, um...you can come here too, I mean, it's not my sister who will bother us, she works half of the time."

- "So, it's a yes?" Max smiled.

- "I, I think it's a yes, yes," Jane answered with an unsure voice.

- "It's gonna be okay, don't worry."

- "Yeah...when do you wanna do it?"

- "Your sister works late on Friday, right? (Jane nods) Then, Friday night, if you want?"

- "Yeah, okay."

- "Cool, but now (places her right hand on Jane's cheek and kisses her on the other one) we have to go or you'll be late."

Jane had struggle to not become totally red. She nodded and followed Max out of the apartment. The redhead was so stressed inside, she was trying to flirt without doing too much, but she didn't know if it was working. By Jane's pink cheeks, the small kiss worked, and she was relieved of that.

## 37. Stress

- "Bev, I'm screwed!" Max said.

The redhead slammed her locker and began to walk in direction of her class with her friend.

- "Calm down, it's just a date," Bev chuckled, keeping her voice down.

- "No, it's not just a date, it's...I don't know! I...I don't have lots of experience in this and it was always the boys who organised them and it didn't work!"

- "Well, when we see who you are in love with now, it probably explained."

- "Love is a bit strong, it's just...a big crush."

- "Then it's a very very very very big crush!"

- "Yeah, whatever!" Max grumbled.

- "God, I've never seen you like that! You are so stressed!" Bev stated with a smile.

- "That's not true!"

- "That's not true!? Are you kidding me!? At the winter exam you forgot your pencil case and didn't care! You asked me a pen just before it begins!"

- "It was just English, it was not the big exam!"

- "Still an exam," Beverly smiled.

- "Anyway, it won't help me for Friday," Max said.

- "Yeah, sure, you have no idea of what you're gonna do?"

- "I was thinking of a movie and eat somewhere but it's a bit...classic."

- "It's a first one, it's normal to be classic, you shouldn't focus too hard



on this and focus on what's really important," Beverly smirked.

- "Oh yeah? And what is it?" Max frowned.

Beverly didn't answer quickly. She looked around to be sure no one could hear what she was going to ask, and got closer to Max to murmur:

- "Are you gonna kiss her?"

- "Bev!" Max exclaimed, surprised and a bit shocked.

- "What!? You're not gonna tell me you hadn't thought about it!?"

- "I, I...of course I did, but it's stressing me more so I prefer not thinking about it."

- "Why are you stressing!? I mean, you already kissed!"

- "But, the situation was not the same, and she hated me after this kiss, now I would prefer her to...you know."

- "What ? Love you?" Bev smirked.

- "At least like me, but yeah...if it could be more..."

- "Aw, that's so cute!"

- "Come on, it's not the first time you see me having feelings for someone!"

- "You mean Gary? Really!? This guy was a cunt, and he didn't treat you correctly, whereas Jane is my friend, I like her, and I'm pretty sure she will treat you the way you deserve," Beverly stated.

- "Yeah, nothing is done!" Max told.

- "You're so pessimistic!"

- "I'm realistic! I'm so bad at flirting I'm sure she thinks I'm ridiculous."

- "And I'm sure not! You spent an entire day with her to buy her some

clothes and have fun because you wanted her to have one good day in her shitty week, I'm sure that's all she remembers and not your weird flirt."

- "My flirt is not weird, it is...in my head."

- "Okay," Beverly chuckled. "You know, I'm sure she is opened to talk about it with you."

- "I won't talk about my stress for our first date! She will run away!"

Beverly shook her head in disbelief. She was amused to see Max completely worried about a date, her who was usually so relax with everything. Bev was sure it was because she was really liking Jane a lot and didn't want to mess up. On their way, they met Jane with an angry and worried face.

- "Hey Jane," Bev greeted with a smile.

- "Hey," the other girl sighed.

- "You're okay?" Max frowned.

- "Yeah, yeah, just other papers, that's all."

- "God, when people are going to stop!" Beverly got worked up.

- "Never," Jane answered. "Anyway, I've got something for you."

Max felt her heart racing, but she wasn't understanding why Jane wanted to give her something in the middle of the hall, they agreed to have no particular contact in public. Bev was looking at her friend next to her and noticed her cheeks blushing and her pupils dilating. Max frowned when she saw Jane holding out bills.

- "Oh! It's for the tee-shirt! Of course, I'm stupid. Did she like it?" Max said.

- "Yeah, totally!" Jane smiled. "What do you think I was going to give you?"

- "Oh nothing, I was wondering, that's all."

- "She wanted you to ask her in marriage," Bev intervened with her voice down.

Jane wide opened her eyes while Max nudged her in her ribs.

- "Wh-why?" Jane asked with a shaking voice. "You told her!?"

- "She was thinking I was hating you!" Max defended herself.

- "I thought we agreed with the « not telling anyone » part!"

- "What? You didn't tell your sister?"

- "Of course I did!"

- "Then I can tell mine too!"

- "Not in the halls!"

- "Nobody cares of what we are saying," Beverly told.

- "That's what you think, talking with all of you is already too risky but if they know for Friday it will be worse for you!"

Max bit her cheeks and gave a small punch to Jane's shoulder.

- "What was that for?" Jane frowned, rubbing her arm.

- "You are thinking too much, relax a bit."

- "It's easy to say!"

- "Okay, sorry, we won't do it again."

Jane sighed loudly with her nose and rubbed her face. She really needed to worry less, it was beginning to become paranoïa, and she didn't want everyone to think she was crazy! She was tired, because of the stress of another school day she had trouble to fall asleep and it had repercussion on her mood. And it wasn't going better with Jenifer approaching them, stopping next to Jane and putting her arm on her shoulder.

- "Hey girls and...Jane," Jenifer mocked.

Jane rolled her eyes while Max and Beverly were killing the other girl with their eyes.

- "What do you want!?" Beverly sharply snapped, crossing her arms.
- "I was just wondering how you were, as you stopped coming in basketball."
- "Too much shitheads."
- "Oh come on, you don't think you're over-reacting?"
- "No, I even think I'm under-reacting."
- "Get off your arm of her, you're embarrassing her on purpose," Max coldly told.
- "Pfff, no I'm not! With Jane we have (carresses her cheek) a particular bond, right Jane?" Jenifer smirked.

Jane closed her eyes, pinched her lips together, looked down, and massaged her right temple like if she had a strong headache. Her face was burning of embarrassment and hoped no one noticed. Unfortunately, the three girls noticed and the two redheads began to have more anger in them.

- "Leave her alone," Max ordered between her teeth.
- "Or what!?"
- "You really wanna know!?"
- "You won't do anything, you're not crazy like Jane," Jenifer scoffed.
- "I wouldn't be this sure."

The two girls stared at each other. Max didn't fade, she didn't want to give this bitch what she wanted.

- "Fine, you are all crazy anyway," the blonde girl said.

Jenifer left them with a provoking wave. Bev looked at Max, who was still angry, and Jane, who was looking away.

- "Are you okay?" Max asked, sharper than she wanted.
- "Yeah, yeah..." Jane nodded, biting her bottom lip on the left side.
- "Did something happen between you and her?" Beverly frowned, pointing behind her with her thumb.
- "No, no...probably the papers..."

Max and Bev nodded, both knowing she was lying.

- "Can I talk to you, about Friday?" Max asked.
- "You want to cancel?" Jane answered with a disappointed tone and sad eyes.

Beverly placed her hands on her mouth to cover her « aw ».

- "No! Of course not! It's just, I would like to talk to you about...things.
- "Um...here?" Jane frowned.
- "Yeah, if, if you want, I mean, there is almost nobody."
- "(looks around) I, I don't know," Jane sighed, scratching the back of her head. "Be quick."
- "Oop, I'll let you talking alone about Fridate," Bev smirked, winking to Max.
- "Go away before one of us decide to kill you," Max said with a joking serious tone.

Beverly chuckled and went inside her class. Jane looked again around to see if someone had heard while Max was shaking her head.

- "You good?" Max asked.
- "Yeah, so, what do you wanna talk about?"
- "Um...I don't know how to say that...It's just, do you know what you wanna do? I mean, I should maybe organise something romantic, but

I don't know if you like it, I was thinking of a movie then restaurant, but it's too classic, and I don't know what I should wear, I mean, I should wear a dress, but I never wear dresses, and I don't know if it's too early to kiss you or if I should wait and—"

- "Okay stop!" Jane cut.

Max stopped talking and took a deep breath. She was supposed to just ask her what she wanted to do but the rest came alone in her mouth.

- "Just be yourself," Jane softly said. "I don't want you to become a person I don't know. I understand, you have new feelings, it's difficult to understand why your feelings change, why now, it's a big change for you. For now, we take our time, no pressure, we just hung out, normal, no need to do something super crazy or to force you to wear a dress, wear something comfy, clothes you like, let's do something classic for now and then...you don't have to kiss me, if it's forced, it's not satisfying for any of us and you will regret it, okay? No pressure."

- "No pressure," Max repeated, feeling the stress decreasing. "I like your hair, um...no, I wanted to say « thank you » but I messed up."

- "It's fine," Jane smiled. "I like your hair too."

Max blushed as a « thank you ». They began to walk together in the halls, in direction of their first period.

- "Hey, you don't limp anymore!" Max stated with enthusiasm.

- "Yeah, Constance thinks it's all recovered, but she prefers me to wait for next week before doing sport again and kicking your ass again at baseball," Jane joked.

- "In your dreams, Miss Brown!"

Jane gently pushed Max who was giggling. They arrived in their class and separated to go to their seats. Barely sat, Max saw Beverly turning to her.

- "So?" the girl whispered.

- "She is amazing," Max sighed with a smile.
- "'Told you, she is smart enough to understand other people's feelings."
- "And you were totally right, I'm so relax now, I'm even excited!"
- "Good! I'm excited too!"

Mr. Smith entering the room stopped the two girls' conversation and forced Beverly to face the blackboard. Max didn't listen a word of her class, too excited by her date and hoping everything would be alright.

## 38. Wound

It was time for Mechanics class, but Lucas was a bit worried. Jane hadn't talked for the entire day, and she had an awful purple wound on her left eye and temple. They asked her what happened, but she ignored the question everytime.

Jane didn't want to talk about it. The day before, after her work, she went back home on foot and, on her way, she met a group of teens from the school. For once, Alban and Abigail weren't here, but it didn't stop them. They threw rocks at her and a big one hit her eye. She ran away while they were laughing, proud of themselves. She was tired and was seeing no end to this. By luck, her vision hadn't been affected, but she was more closed on herself and wondered if the date was a good idea. Maybe another group would wait for them and attack them. She shook her head, even if she was scared, she didn't want to stop living, it was like giving them right, and she couldn't accept that! She sighed loudly with her nose, getting her friend's attention. She had a question for him but didn't how to ask it. She heard something weeks ago, and she hadn't stopped thinking about it since.

- "Can I ask you something?" Jane shyly said, looking at the engine in front of them.

Lucas was surprised to hear her voice but felt honored to be the one she wanted to talk to. Maybe Jane was trusting him, and she was right, the young boy was ready to do anything for his friends.

- "Sure, go on," Lucas encouraged with a warm smile, even if she wasn't looking at him.

- "You...you remember when I hit Alban's face?"

- "In class? Yeah, of course, kinda hard to forget," the boy lightly chuckled. "Why?"

- "Before he...provoked me, he called you by names."

- "Oh yeah, don't worry, we are used to it."



- "No, it's not that. I mean, I kinda understand which nicknames are for, I mean, Carbon it's you, Queer it's Will, Frog Face it's Mike, Toothless it's Dustin but...who is Freckles?" Jane frowned.

- "Oh...it's Max," Lucas answered, thinking he understood what she meant.

- "Okay..."

Lucas waited a moment. He wondered if Jane was going to ask him, but the girl seemed lost in her thoughts and too anxious to ask.

- "You wondered why they are calling Beverly Incest, right?" Lucas finally told.

- "I think I understand, it's just...I, I didn't know, it's...it's horrible...I can't even imagine what she had been through..." Jane said with a weak voice.

- "Yeah...I'm not gonna lie, it was a really dark period. We didn't know at first, she never invited us or wanted us to even know where she was living, and one day, she exploded and beat her father's face until blood...I mean, his face was bleeding but her hands too."

- "Is he..."

- "Dead? No, but he is in jail and I hope for a very very long time. She lives with her aunt and uncle now, she had a long therapy because she was really really bad...she did bad things, she had...um, alcohol problems, she was smoking and we think she even took drugs."

- "Oh god..."

- "Yes, it was hard. And the school wasn't helping, even if it was less than what you're leaving, mockeries can hurt a lot and some people have no limits."

- "Yeah, I know that..."

- "She still see a psychologist, but she feels way better. Well, I hope she does."

- "You never talk about it with her?" Jane asked.

- "I, I don't know if it's a good idea, I'm always worried to say the wrong thing or to bring back her old bad memories she is fighting against since years now," Lucas explained. "You think we should?"

- "No, I don't know, just checking how she is, but sometimes you can't know when someone is not okay."

- "Sometimes we know, but the person doesn't talk."

Jane looked at him for the first time since the beginning of the conversation.

- "You are talking about me?" Jane asked, already knowing the answer.

- "I, I didn't want to be rude, it's just...we see what's on the walls, we hear what they say, and we saw your purple eye this morning and your change of mood. We asked you how you were and what happened but you didn't even answer, so yeah, sometimes it's hard to help when the other person doesn't want help."

Jane nodded.

- "I, I just don't wanna talk about it..."

- "I understand, but you know we are for you. Anytime! You can talk to us, or one of us, we don't have to all know if you don't want to," Lucas told.

- "Yeah, yeah, I know..." Jane sighed. "It's just...I've been in many schools before here, I made some friends and it was always the same things, they all discovered I'm lesbian, so people began to bully me, but I can resist a lot and they got bored, so they attacked my friends...and I lost my friends...I'm tired of always living the god damn same thing!"

- "Oh shit, I'm sorry...I didn't know..."

- "It's okay, I just don't want this to happen to you, you lived enough, you don't deserve to be involved in my shit."

- "We are friends, we are all in the same shit, we share the shit, if you are in the shit, we are in the shit, whether you like it or not," Lucas smiled.

Jane looked at him with soft eyes and smiled for the first time of the day. Lucas looked with insistence her eye and lost his smile. He was feeling sorry for Jane and didn't know why she didn't want to tell him what happened. Jane noticed his look and looked down at the engine.

- "I fell, that's all," Jane told.

- "I know you're lying," Lucas stated.

- "Yes, you're right."

- "Oh, you don't even deny."

- "No, it's obvious I'm lying, I wouldn't hide it if I had just fallen, it's stupid!" the girl got worked up.

- "Okay Jane, calm down."

- "No I'm not calming down! When you become a parent, you have responsibilities, you are supposed to take care of your child! Same blood or not! This is not fair! Things like that should never happen! NEVER!"

Jane was taking support on the car in front of her while she was breathing heavily with her mouth and looking in the void. The entire class stopped living to watch her losing her mind, waiting for more. Lucas looked around like if someone could know what to do.

- "It's burning!" Jane told.

- "Wh-what's burning?" Lucas frowned.

- "My eye!"

- "Why are you always screaming!?" the teacher got angry.

- "BECAUSE IT'S BURNING!" Jane yelled.

- "I take her to the nurse's office," Lucas quickly said.

The young boy took his stuff and her stuff before taking her arm to force her to follow him outside with the teacher telling them to not come back after.

Jane was sitting on the medical bed, staring into space, the nurse taking care of her wound, while Lucas was next to her, holding her hand and rubbing it.

- "Next time, go to see a doctor before it got infected," the nurse told when she finished.

- "I...I can't..."

- "Why not?"

- "I can't pay, we can't pay everything..."

- "Then, next time you come directly to me, and I'll see if you need a doctor, okay? Now take some rest, you are so pale that you could scare a ghost," the nurse smiled.

She stood and let the two teens alone.

- "You...you have money problems?" Lucas asked.

- "She lost a job! I took one to help her but it's not enough and now I'm wondering if I'll not find another one...We stopped using the car because it costs too much and...she had been fired because she was spending more time in my headmaster's office than her classroom...It's all my fault..." Jane explained with tears falling.

- "Oh, Jane, I'm so sorry..."

- "I don't know what I'm gonna do..."

- "Hey, I'm sure she will find another job."

- "But if she lost the one she had now, and she doesn't have another one we are screwed!" Jane panicked.

- "Take a breath Jane!" Lucas quickly said, seeing her desperate eyes.

Jane nodded and tried to calm her breathing.

- "You are putting too much pressure on yourself! If the school where she was working was unable to understand that it's family first, it's not your fault. Everytime you finished at the headmaster's office, it wasn't your fault."

- "You don't understand, Lucas, it's always my fault, even when I'm right," Jane stated with a calmer tone.

- "What do you mean?" the young boy frowned.

- "(sighs) When, when we've been assaulted with my ex, I broke two arms and three noses..."

- "Awesome!"

- "Let me finish."

- "Yes, sorry," Lucas pouted.

- "We claimed a file against them, obviously, but...their parents, they claimed a file too..."

- "What the hell!? Why!?"

- "Because I broke their noses and arms," Jane said like if it was normal.

Lucas took a moment to digest the information. He was so angry right now! No one deserved to live that, and Jane was clearly still traumatised by this story, which was normal! Jane had a deep breathing, she was feeling the tears coming back and was unable to talk right now. Living again and again this moment of her life became harder with the time. She was still thinking she could have done something.

- "What happened next?" Lucas shyly asked, not sure if she wanted to continue.

- "I got nothing only because I was at the hospital and...they had six months of community service," Jane answered, clenching her jaw.

Lucas felt Jane's hand tensing in his. He could see and feel the anger inside her. Probably because he was as angry as her.

- "If you weren't at the hospital, what were you risking?"

- "Three months in jail."

- "WHAT!? That's insane! What the fuck!" Lucas got angry.

- "Yeah, that's exactly what my sister said. We had to pay for their medical care, but no one paid for mine! I spent eight months at the hospital! Eight months! And I got nothing from them!" Jane half screamed with tears in her eyes.

- "Eight months!? God, what have they done to you!?"

- "They broke me...They broke my arms, my ribs, my leg and...my jaw...I, I couldn't move, I couldn't scream...She, she was dying in front of me...and I couldn't scream..."

- "Oh no..."

Lucas brought her closer to him, wrapping his arm around her shoulder. She began to silently cry on his chest, hugging him.

After a moment, the two teens left the nurse's office with some painkillers that the nurse gave to the young girl. In the halls, the two walked slowly, Lucas's arm on her shoulder, when they ran into Gabrielle.

- "Hey you two," Gabrielle greeted. "Is everything okay?"

- "Yes," Lucas nodded. "We were at the nurse's office, for her eye."

- "Oh, what's wrong? What happened to your eye?"

- "Nothing..." Jane answered, avoiding eyes contact.

- "I'm, I'm really sorry for...everything that happened to you, you

don't deserve it."

- "Yeah..." Jane sighed. "Thank you."

- "Um...you don't mind if I hug you?" the black-haired girl asked.

- "Why?" Jane frowned, on the defensive, stepping a bit behind Lucas like to protect herself. "Is it a bet or something like that!?"

- "No, no, it's just, you seem to need it, that's all. But if you don't want it's okay, I understand."

- "I, I don't know..."

Jane looked around to see if Alban and the others were not hidden somewhere to watch them. But apparently not, Gabrielle seemed sincere in her proposition. She didn't know if she should accept, she didn't know her very well, and she was finding her very pretty, it would be disrespectful.

Seeing Jane hesitating, Gabrielle made the first step and wrapped her arms around Jane. The other girl took a moment before wrapping her arms too. The two tightened the hug and Gabrielle couldn't hold a smile on her face. Lucas looked at them with a proud smile for her girlfriend. He didn't understand why she wanted to hug Jane, but it couldn't be bad for her. Gabrielle broke the hug, wiped Jane's tear on her cheek and smiled to her.

- "You're gonna be okay," Gabrielle softly said.

Jane clumsily nodded, a bit destabilized by what just happened. She was still thinking that Abigail or Alban were going to appear to mock her or worse. The only persons who appeared were Max and Will.

- "Hey guys, what's up? Your eye looks better," Will shyly said.

- "We went to the nurse's office," Lucas explained.

- "It was a good idea, it was awful," Max stated.

- "It was burning," Jane told.

Max and Will got surprised, they hadn't heard Jane's voice all day and were relieved she was finally talking.

- "You feel better now?" the redhead asked.
- "I...think," Jane frowned. "I'm, I'm going now."
- "You work?" Will said.
- "Yes, I don't wanna be late."
- "Okay, I come with you," Max told.
- "You're sure?"
- "More than sure."
- "Um...ok..."
- "You don't come?" Max asked to Will.
- "No, I'm supposed to see Dustin for an amazing work in English," Will sarcastically answered.
- "Sounds...entertaining," Gabrielle frowned.
- "Oh ! I hadn't presented you, (turns to his girlfriend) Gabrielle, Max and Will, (turns to his friends) Max and Will, Gabrielle."

The three persons saluted by shaking their hands.

- "We finally meet you! After ten years!" Max joked.
- "Fuck you Max," Lucas smiled.
- "I love you too. Anyway, we have to go, I don't want Jane to be late, bye."
- "Bye!" Lucas, Will, and Gabrielle said at the same time.

The three friends watched the two girls going away from them. Will said bye to them and joined Dustin at the library. Lucas turned to his girlfriend with a frown.



- "What's wrong, Sinclair?"

- "Why did you hug her? I mean, you are not really friend, you saw her twice."

- "She is your friend, so she is mine," Gabrielle answered with a smile. "All this hate made me sick and...I did it for her mind."

- "Her mind?"

- "I've observed her those last weeks, she is forbidding herself to stay close to a girl, to even look at them just because everyone decided she is...too different to exist. Imagine being at her place, not allowing yourself to be...yourself, it can destroy her, I mean, you're black you know better than anyone what discrimination is!"

- "Um...maybe...You think it will help her?"

- "I...hope," Gabrielle said with an unsure tone.

- "Then let's hope!" Lucas smiled.

The girl kissed her boyfriend on his cheek before grabbing his hand and walking in the halls.

Max and Jane were almost at the store, and Jane still didn't say a word. Max was even wondering if she listened to her story about her altercation with her Italian teacher.

- "Jane? Are you here?"

- "Mmh? Oh yeah, sorry..."

- "What's wrong? You've acted weird all day long and you have a big hematoma on your eye who appeared in one night!"

- "I know," Jane answered with an irritated tone.

- "So!? What happened to you yesterday!? And why are you this quiet !?" Max insisted with strenght.

- "I don't wanna talk."

- "Like usual."

- "Okay, are you reproaching me something!?" Jane asked with an angry tone.

- "No! It's just...we all know something happened to you, I just don't understand why you don't want to tell us!" Max explained.

- "Because you don't need to know!"

- "Why not!?"

- "I don't want to worry you!"

The two girls stopped in front of the store and faced each other.

- "Do you really think that coming back to school with bruises, keeping quiet, shaking, and more it's reassuring me!? Jane, what are you thinking!? We've been worried the entire day!"

- "I know!" Jane got worked up.

- "Why are you so angry!?" Max frowned.

- "I'm not!"

- "Yes, you are! And it's becoming constant! You're like, good a day and the second after you yell and become violent for an unknown reason!"

- "No, I'm fine! Stop treating me like a child!"

- "But you act like a child!"

- "Fuck off Max!"

- "Oh no, don't do this to me, I know what you're doing and it's not a good idea Jane!" Max stated with an upset tone and pointing her finger to her like to support her words.

Max angrily stared at Jane a moment while the other girl was clenching her jaw. The redhead was sure that Jane was the kind of person who needed her ass kicked sometimes. She put down her

finger and took a deep breath to calm herself.

- "We should cancel, for Friday," Jane told.

- "Yeah, you're clearly not ready!" Max stated, feeling disappointed.  
"We could just wait all of this to settle down!"

- "It's not the problem!"

- "Then what's the problem!? I'm listening!"

- "It's nothing, everything is bullshit!"

- "What is bullshit Jane!? School!? Life!? Can you fucking develop to help people to understand what's the matter!?"

- "I don't know! It's...everything! I want to stop!"

- "Stop what!?"

Jane didn't answer. She was clenching more her jaw and avoiding eyes contacts with Max. The redhead, on her side, tried to make eyes contact with her but in vain. But she thought she had understood what she meant, and she didn't like it.

- "You want to stop us, right?" Max said with bitterness in her voice.

- "We are not girlfriends Max, there is nothing between us!"

- "Yeah, that's what I see. We are not even friends apparently."

Jane opened her mouth but nothing came out. Max wasn't really waiting for an answer anyway, nothing could repair that, she had never felt so betrayed in her entire life and many people did! But it was the first time she had wanted to cry. She didn't, she thought Jane didn't deserve her to cry for her, she treated her like shit, she didn't want to cry for her.

- "Don't worry, I'll leave you alone. I thought it was because you were scared and bullied but no, you're just a fucking selfish dick! I won't bother you anymore with my bullshits feelings!"

Max walked away without looking back. She was too angry and didn't want to give her the pleasure to think she won. Why was she rejecting her right now!? She was sure Jane had feelings for her but now...she didn't know what to think, and she wasn't in the mood to think.

Jane watched the redhead getting away from her. She was drowning deeper and deeper in her own shit and saw no solution to get out of this. Her own fears were controlling her life, and she didn't know how to get rid of it. She closed her fists so strongly that she could feel her own nails sinking in her palms. She entered the store, breathing heavily with her nose, with a furious walk but stopped when she noticed Joyce looking at her.

- "Is everything okay with Max?" Joyce asked with a frown.

- "Sure, why would there be something wrong!?" Jane answered angrier than she wanted.

- "She seemed pretty mad and...you seem really mad too."

- "Yeah, that's pretty constant lately!"

Jane tried to walk to the back store, but Joyce grabbed her arm and stopped her.

- "All this anger, it's not good for you," Joyce said.

- "You don't think I already know!?"

- "Then why are you doing everything to stay like that?"

- "I, I'm not," Jane frowned.

- "Yes you are, you just rejected her, why do you do that!?"

- "She doesn't need me!"

- "Are you sure of that!?"

- "I have nothing good to give her," Jane told, breathing heavily of anger.

- "You didn't give you a chance!" Joyce firmly stated.

- "I don't need to! I've lost too many people like this, I can handle this but I can't bring other people with me! This is my shit! MY SHIT! DO YOU UNDERSTAND!?"

Jane's face was red of anger, and her breathing was more than heavy. Joyce didn't know what to say to calm her or to reassure her, she seemed so bad in her own body, it was hard to see.

- "Jane, nothing of this should have happened to you, this is not fair..." Joyce told.

- "I KNOW IT'S NOT FAIR!" Jane yelled. "Loren didn't deserve to be raped and to be killed, Andrew didn't deserve to kill himself, Juan didn't deserve to...do those things with me! No one deserves this! Can you all stop telling me that!? It doesn't help me and it doesn't stop them from attacking me! I'm used to it, I can handle them, I can handle the pain! She doesn't have to! I'm tired of losing people!"

- "You prefer hurting her than giving her a chance!?"

- "But the problem is not her, okay!? It's everyone else!"

Jane took a moment to calm her breathing. Joyce looked into Jane's eyes with insistance, like if she could see what was in her brain.

- "It's more complicated," Jane continued.

- "No it's not, but it's hard, and... what you did, it's not correct, for you and for Max. You know it's not the right thing," Joyce stated.

- "But, there is no right thing..."

- "You think?"

- "...I...I don't know...Everytime something good happen to me, it doesn't last, it just...disappear like if, like if I didn't deserve it...to punish me...everything is my fault..."

- "Oh Jane...you know, your sister didn't lost her job because of you."

- "What?" Jane frowned. "How can you know everything like that!?"
- "I saw her this afternoon, she told me to keep an eye on you because you weren't feeling good and you were thinking it was your fault."
- "God damn it! Why does she have to treat me like that!?"
- "Like what? Her little sister?"

Jane rolled her eyes and sighed with her nose.

- "You know what's your problem?" Joyce rhetorically asked.
- "I have a lot of problems," Jane answered.
- "You worry too much. You think of the worst instead of thinking of the good things. I understand that you prefer avoiding horrible things but, you can't spend your time rejecting people because of it, it's hurting them, and you're the reason of their pain. And it's hurting you."

Joyce looked again deeply in the young girl's eyes. They were so expressive, that was thanks to them that Joyce understood Jane's preference for girls, and especially Max. Now, it was like the woman managed to break the angry shell that Jane used to protect herself of her own feelings and of the world outside. The young girl just nodded, before going to her work, while Joyce was hoping she was feeling better.

### 39. Anger

The party was around their table at the cafeteria. Max had been unpleasant the entire morning, and they didn't know why.

- "Max, what's wrong?" Mike finally asked.
- "Nothing, everything is fine," the redhead sharply answered.
- "You don't seem ok," Will stated.
- "I am okay!"
- "Okay, okay," the young boy pouted.

They all looked at each other, hoping someone knew what was wrong, but they were all lost.

- "Did something happen with Neil?" Lucas frowned.
- "No! I'm just in a bad day, that's all," Max explained, making a movement with her hand to end the conversation.

Max was too pissed to eat and preferred leaving the table. Beverly had an idea of the reason of her anger and followed her in the halls.

- "Hey!" Beverly called, running to her. "What's wrong?"
- "Nothing!" Max answered, opening her locker.
- "You're not angry for nothing. Did something happen with Jane?"
- "(slams her locker) Exactly! She is the worst human I've never met in my entire life!"
- "What!? What happened!?"
- "Nothing happened! Of course nothing happened because there never was anything between us!"
- "She cancelled for tomorrow?" Bev frowned, not sure to understand.

- "Yes she did! But that's not the problem, she can cancel if she thinks she is not ready, it's fine, I can understand that, the problem is that she doesn't want to do it later, she just wants to stop! After making me believe that I was different and that I could...try something with her she just threw me away like a fucking garbage!" Max angrily explained.

- "Wh—Tell me you're joking!?"

- "Do I look like I'm joking!?"

- "No...of course not...But why did she do that!?"

- "I don't know, and I don't care! She can go fuck herself!"

Max didn't want to talk about it and left Beverly in the hall. But Bev was determined to not let this story ending like that, she had class with Jane after lunch, and the girl was always the first one in the room, so she didn't wait a second and joined her. She was effectively there, near the window as usual. She was alone, it was perfect. The redhead sat next to her, but Jane ignored her.

- "So that's it!? You don't need us anymore so we become just ghosts of your past!?" Beverly sharply began.

- "You are going to lecture me too!?" Jane answered with the same tone.

- "Yes! What the fuck is wrong with you!?"

- "Oh please! I've already had Joyce and my sister! Can you just, please, leave me alone!?"

- "Leave you alone!? Jane you're always alone! And Max is my fucking best friend, okay!? You had no rights to play with her like you did!"

- "But I wasn't playing!"

- "Oh really!? She is furious because thanks to you she discovered a part of her she didn't know, she began to have feelings for you, and when she thought that maybe it could be reciprocal you decided to



stop!? And you're telling me you weren't playing!? What was the fucking goal !? What happened to you!?"

Jane didn't answer. She didn't know what she meant by « what happened to you!? » so she frowned in her direction, hoping her to develop.

- "The first time we met you, you were a shy and quiet little Jane who was making jokes and smiling to us, now you are becoming an angry, depressed, and unpleasant stupid Jane who avoids her friends and even yells at them, I want to understand what happened. What have they done to you?" Beverly asked with a softer tone and some tears in her eyes.

- "I, I don't wanna talk about it..." Jane answered with tears too and her chin shaking like if she was going to cry, looking at her desk.

- "But, something happened, right?"

Jane lightly shrugged. She didn't know if it was one thing or the accumulation of everything. All she knew was that she had a problem and didn't know how to solve it.

- "You should talk to someone about this," Beverly said.

- "About what?" Jane sniffed.

- "About...how you feel, you don't want to talk to us, but there is something that is blocking you...Do you still see the school psychologist?"

- "Yes, why?"

- "Do you talk about it with him?"

Jane bit her bottom lip on the left and shook her head to say no.

- "Why?"

- "Because, everytime I tried they just wanted to understand what was the origin of...(shows herself) my homosexuality. They never helped me, so why now!?"

- "Oh..."

Beverly was still mad at her, but she was feeling sorry too. It was like if she had been alone all her life and never had the help she needed.

- "I thought you were supposed to hide?" Bev told with less anger.

- "Yeah, but for how long?" Jane scoffed. "With Loren we were supposed to hide too, but one day I made the mistake to kiss her in public which exposed us. Everyone learnt it so we tried to not hide anymore, and she had been killed."

Beverly felt like hit by her words. Especially by the way she said it, it was cold. She found nothing to answer. She placed her head on Jane's shoulder and rubbed her back.

- "Don't touch me like that!" Jane grumbled.

- "There is no one, relax!"

- "I don't care!"

- "Okay, (straightens) I'm sorry," Beverly said. "You should talk to her."

- "What?" Jane frowned.

- "Max, you should talk to her, you are missing something, there is...this electricity between you and her, you can't deny it!"

- "Uh...electricity?"

- "Yeah, you know, attraction, something more...physical."

- "You can feel that!?"

- "You both irradiate physical attraction, a blind person could see it!"

- "Oh...just this?"

- "What do you mean?"

- "There is...just physical attraction?" Jane asked.

- "Um, I hope not! I wasn't meaning it that way, not like you just want to have sex with each other and that's all but more in the way...you want to hold her hand and she wants to hug you and probably kiss you too, and you both blush when you see each other, kinda cute," Bev explained. "I don't know if it's clear."

- "It was."

- "So? You're going to talk to her?"

- "No."

- "But why!?"

- "Because! Just leave me alone with that!"

Beverly clenched her jaw and faced the blackboard in front of her, crossing her arms.

- "Fine, finish alone if it's what you want, but don't hurt my friend again, don't give her hope if there is nothing behind. You are a piece of shit!" Beverly angrily stated.

Jane didn't answer. Beverly's words hurt her more than she thought, but she was still scared to involve Max in a shit she didn't ask for. She was hating herself too much now, and she was worried for a sister to find a new job.

## 40. Fridate

It was Friday night, and Jane was exhausted. She just came back from her work and sat at her kitchen table next to her sister.

- "I have job interviews tomorrow, stop worrying for me, okay?" Constance told.

Jane just nodded. She thought she had all the reasons to worry, she didn't want to finish again in the school with Sister Bernadette, she wasn't sure she could handle that again. But now she was hungry, and she was wondering why there was no food. Anyway, she was pissed because she was supposed to be on her date with Max now, but as usual, she fucked everything up. Someone knocked at the door, and Constance stood to open. Maybe she ordered pizzas.

- "You took your time," Constance said.

- "Next time you do it yourself!" the other person grumbled. "I couldn't find the fucking spray cheese!"

Jane frowned. It wasn't a pizza deliver, and she knew this girl's voice. The suspense didn't last a long time, Max appeared in the corridor with two boxes of pizza followed by Constance who was holding a small bag with food inside. Jane stayed dazed, she wasn't expecting to see her here especially after what she told her. She frowned more with her mouth opened like if a word could go out at any moment. Constance had an amused smile and put what was in the bag in the fridge while Max places the boxes on the table.

- "Close your mouth Jane, you're gonna eat flies," Constance told.

Jane closed her mouth and loudly gulped, still looking at the redhead killing her with her blue eyes. Constance straightened and looked at her young sister who was completely bugged and lost.

- "I'm going to join Robin and her friends tonight, I think you both have things to talk about."

The blonde teen approached her little sister and kissed the top of her

head before telling her :

- "Stay calm, I love you."

Constance was almost outside when Jane started.

- "I love you too!" she answered.

The door slammed, leaving the two girls alone in the appartement. Jane was still not understanding the situation and the smell of the pizza and Max's cold stare weren't helping her to focus.

- "So," Max began, containing her anger, "if you wanna know why I'm here it's because of Bev and your sister. Bev told me she talked to you yesterday, apparently something happened, which we already knew since you act like...that, but anyway, it's not the problem."

- "Um...okay."

- "Okay!? That's all you have to say!? You...! God! You get on my nerves!"

- "What do you want me to say!?" Jane frowned.

- "I don't know you could actually look sorry!"

- "But I am!"

- "Why don't you say it then!?"

- "I don't know, I wanted to hear what you wanted to tell me first!"

Max was going to answer but preferred taking a deep breath. She didn't stay a long time calm! She rubbed her face, wondering why she accepted to come here to talk to her! And Jane looking at her with her puppy eyes like if she was waiting for her to yell once for all wasn't helping! She took a chair and sat next to Jane.

- "Look, I'm really mad at you right now, but Bev thinks that you told me to stop only because you are too scared to live the same thing that happened to your ex, is it right!?"

- "Uh...yes...kinda..."
- "Kinda!? What does that mean « kinda »!?"
- "It's just...it's not just that..."
- "Then what is it!?"
- "It's everything Max, everything."
- "Everything!? But what is everything!? Your eye!? The papers in your locker!? When you « fell » in the forest!?"
- "I can't walk in the street without wondering if I have someone behind me following me and waiting the right moment to attack me, I'm scared to open my own locker, I'm fearing the next days every nights in my bed, I can't sleep because of that! Do you really wanna live that!?" Jane angrily stated.

Max frowned a bit. Like usual, Jane was scared.

- "I was just walking home," Jane continued with a shaking voice and wet eyes. "I was just walking and those teens decided to throw me rocks for fun! I didn't even know who they were but them, they knew what I am and threw me rocks for this! I could have finished blind or worse but they didn't care, they were just laughing at me!"

Max took a moment to look at Jane. The poor girl had tears in her eyes and seemed terrified.

- "Was it hard?" Max asked with a calmer tone.
- "What?"
- "To tell me, it was hard?"
- "Uh...yeah, it was..."
- "Why?" Max softly said.
- "...I don't know..." Jane shrugged, looking down. "I kinda feel...pathetic to be such an easy target..."

- "I don't think you're an easy target. At the skatepark you defended yourself and against Alban you did it too. The only problem it's that no one allow you to defend yourself, so you stopped and you let them hurt you because you think if you do something, you'll have more problems. It's like...a vicious circle, you are in the shit no matter what."

- "Yeah...yeah...it's clearly that."

- "Do you know why I'm mad at you? (Jane shakes her head to say no) Because you rejected me, thinking I couldn't understand what you feel without giving me the chance to try. Not because you wanted to stop, but for the reason you wanted to stop, you preferred rejecting me than letting me help you. You really think I don't have emotions!? I'm angry against the world every day, I hate almost everyone at school, I'm sad when I hear Neil yelling, I want to kill people who hurt you and more! Don't close up on yourself, you will explode!"

- "...I'm sorry..." Jane apologized with a higher voice than usual because of her tightened throat and with some tears falling.

Jane was trying to hold her tears, she didn't want to cry in front of Max, but the fact that she was still there, trying to be part of her life and telling her why she was mad was touching her a lot. Maybe Joyce was right, maybe good things could happen with Max finally. The redhead had a soft smile, all her anger disappeared.

- "I'm gonna be clear Jane, I have a plan to make disappear a dead body, I would be sad to try it with yours because you'll have done something like this again," Max joked.

- "Got it," Jane chuckled with a sniff.

- "You gave me another chance when I kissed you, so I give you another chance, do you accept it?"

- "Of course I do."

- "Don't ruin it."

- "I'll try, but I'm sadly good to ruin everything," Jane stated.

- "Then, I'll have to watch you to be sure you won't," Max smirked.

Jane had a relieved chuckle with a tear falling on her cheek. She didn't know why she deserved this second chance, but she didn't want to fuck it up. She really hoped she wasn't going to fuck it up.

- "We should eat before you die of starvation," the redhead joked.

Jane nodded. Max opened the box of pizza, and Jane had a big smile when she saw it. It was her favorite pizza with lots of cheese, and she loved cheese. The redhead gave her a slice before taking one too and putting her legs on Jane's lap like if she was a footrest.

- "Is it your revenge?" Jane asked with a smile.

- "Mmh mmh, I can do worse if you want," Max answered.

- "Oh, I believe you! But I'm fine with this, if you're not scared to have lots of creamy cheese all over your jeans."

- "I take the risk."

Jane chuckled again which made smile the redhead.

- "At least it's not a classic first date," Max smirked.

Jane's smile grew more even if she was trying to hide it. She felt a nice warm in her heart and her cheeks becoming red. Even if it wasn't the dreaming date, it was still a date, and, at least, they were completely alone, far from possible problems.

- "I told you I wanted my date."

- "Yeah, but we weren't supposed to have an argue just before..."

- "And we weren't supposed to do it here! Shit happens," Max shrugged. "And we're good here, we can do things that we can't do in public."

- "Like putting your legs on me," Jane stated with a mocking tone.

- "Exactly! And this."



Max held out her hand on her left leg, in direction of Jane. The other girl had a small sigh with her nose and a soft smile. She placed her hand inside the redhead's. Max closed it and rubbed gently the back of Jane's hand, staring at her with a smile.

- "The electricity," Jane whispered.

- "What?" Max frowned.

- "Um, the electricity, that's what Bev told me, that we have, uh, electricity, like physical attraction..."

Jane looked at Max with worried eyes. Maybe it wasn't the time to talk about physical attraction, not at a first date.

- "Oookay, I take note of that," Max slowly nodded.

Jane pinched her lips together and looked away. She hoped she didn't scare her with her physical attraction.

- "I took a dessert for you," Max said.

- "Just for me?" Jane frowned.

- "No, but it's something you like, cherry jello and spray cheese."

- "Really?" Jane smiled.

- "Huh huh."

- "Constance told you?"

- "No, I'm just a genius," the redhead joked. "Of course she told me."

Max stood and went to the fridge. Jane was a bit frustrated because she wanted to keep holding her hand. The redhead threw her the spray cheese while she was holding the jello. Jane took bowls and spoons and went on the couch followed by Max.

- "I don't understand why you like it so much," Max told while she was giving a bowl to Jane.

- "For the taste," Jane smiled.

- "Chemical cherry?"

- "Just cherry," the girl chuckled.

They both leaned on the couch, Jane sank in it. Max looked at her with an amused smile. Jane didn't care to impress her or look good in front of her, she was just herself and it was what she was liking the most in her. The redhead decided to take the same position as her and realised it was way more comfy like that.

Jane turned her head and met Max's blue eyes and couldn't hold her smile, maybe it was the dreaming date, she wasn't asking more, just being next to Max was enough. But, she couldn't stop thinking about all the problems she could have if someone knew, what people like Abigail and Alban could do to her, what her step-father could tell her to break her or eve-

- "Jane?" Max frowned.

The other girl lightly started and looked again at Max.

- "Are you okay? You're a bit pale," the redhead asked, caressing her cheek.

- "Um...yeah, I was just...lost in my thoughts..."

- "What's wrong?"

- "Nothing," Jane answered. "I mean, nothing more than usual."

- "You're worrying?"

Jane shyly nodded, looking down and feeling ashamed to be worried again. Max rolled on her side to face her friend.

- "What are you worried about?" the redhead softly told.

- "I don't know," Jane shrugged. "It's just, I can't stop thinking of the bad things that could happen to you."

- "Jane, bad things will happen to me, but it won't always be because of us. My step-father is a bad thing, and I live with him, my step-

brother was a bad thing, and other things. Bad things always happen, to everyone."

- "Like Bev..."

- "Um...yeah, you know about her father?" Max frowned.

- "Lucas told me," Jane answered.

- "Okay...so, you see, bad things always happen, and there is nothing you can do about it."

Jane nodded.

- "You're still worried?" Max asked.

- "Yes."

- "Well, I'm not good at those things apparently."

- "It's not true, I'm a bit less worried."

- "Oh, I'm not this bad then," the redhead smiled.

- "I'm sorry..." Jane apologized.

- "I don't care," Max answered with a cold tone.

Jane felt a pinch in her heart. Why was she so sharp now? She thought it was okay between them now.

- "It hurts, right?" Max smirked.

- "What?" Jane frowned, totally lost.

- "That's what you answered me when I apologized for the kiss, in front of Mr. Watchby's office."

- "Oh yeah! Oh...I wasn't very tender..."

- "Indeed."

- "You're here just for revenge," Jane stated with folded eyes.

- "Maybe," the redhead smiled.

Jane took the spray cheese and sprayed inside her mouth under the disgusted eyes of Max.

- "How can you eat that like this!?"

- "I love cheese," Jane told with the half of cheese on her face.

- "You're disgusting," the redhead chuckled.

- "I know."

Jane put the spray above Max to ask her if she wanted some. The redhead hesitated but opened her mouth. Jane sprayed a bit inside her mouth.

- "I prefer with crackers," Max told, after having swallowed it.

- "Yeah but I don't have crackers," Jane pouted.

The two girls wiped their faces before sinking again in the couch, turned to each other. They stopped talking, just staring at each other's eyes. Their breathings became faster and their hearts were racing, both looking at each other's lips now. Their faces were at a few inches now, their noses touching, feeling the other one's desire to go further, their lips almost touching...The door slammed, making start the two girls.

- "I hope it's not the coach!" Max joked frustrated.

Jane had a small chuckle but was frustrated too. She saw her sister's head appearing in the kitchen and was hating her a lot right now.

- "Did I interrupt something?" Constance smiled, already knowing the answer.

- "You're here early!" Jane answered.

- "Not really, it's 11 p.m. and I have interviews job tomorrow."

- "I should go," Max said. "It's late, my mom will be worried if I go

back home later."

- "Okay," Jane sighed.

The two girls stood. Max took back her stuff, and Jane accompanied her in front of her apartment. Max smiled to her and kissed her on her cheek. Jane had a stupid smile but was very happy of this night with Max. She was hoping that next time, it would be the time.

## 41. Running

The young girl was coming back to her home. The breathing fast, she could feel the adrenalin in her veins. She finally reached her stairs without stopping running before opening her door and slamming it.

- "Nice run?" the blonde young adult asked.
- "Yes! I missed it so much!" Jane smiled, breathing heavily.
- "How is your ankle?"
- "Good, it didn't hurt at all!"
- "Great, be careful, just in case."
- "Yeah, okay."

Jane took a shower before joining her sister around the kitchen table. Constance was wearing a white shirt and black pants with her legs moving.

- "You're stressing?" Jane asked with a smile.
- "Yeah, kinda."
- "I'm sure it will be fine."
- "I'm sure too, I just don't like selling myself," Constance pouted.
- "I know, you don't need to, your charisma will do all the thing," Jane joked, nudging her sister.

Constance chuckled and playfully rolled her eyes. She took a last sip of her coffee, kissed her sister's head, and left the apartment for her first job interview.

Jane was alone at the table, eating her toast covered of cherry jam, thinking of the day before. She still couldn't believe that Max came after what she told her, she had been awful, she was still feeling horrible for having rejected her like that. She lost her smile and

began to wonder if she could handle this again, the stress, the looks on them, the insults, and the aggressions. Maybe it wasn't a good idea to involve Max in this, it was a bit selfish, just for her own pleasure. She shook her head. If she began to think like that, she would never go further in her life. She needed and wanted to try with Max, and it was apparently reciprocal. She really needed to relax.

She got ready to go to the store. To help her sister -even if Constance was against the idea- she decided to work more and, as she « stopped » basket-ball, she had all her Saturday free. She took her green BMX and drove to it.

Not really far, two redheads were meeting at the skatepark. Max called Beverly and explained her she spent the evening and a part of the night with Jane, which excited her friend. They were sitting on a bench, a bit isolated of the other teens, to talk privately.

- "So, tell me everything," Beverly smiled.

- "It was weird at first, I was so mad at her for what she told me! But I know what happened to her eye and why she « wanted » to stop," Max explained.

- "Oh! What happened!? She didn't fall, right?"

- "Of course not. She was coming back from her work and a group of teens threw her rocks."

- "What!? Fuck those bastards!" Bev got angry. "What the hell is wrong with them!?"

- "Yeah I know! It's better for them that I don't know who they are!"

- "Clearly!"

- "Anyway, so we talked, and she clearly has trouble to share her emotions with someone."

- "It's not really surprising. The only person she talks about is her sister, her « friends » probably betrayed or abandoned her, so when she meets new people, it becomes hard for her."

- "Yeah, that's what I thought too. But I'm glad she did a bit yesterday, maybe...I don't know, she is maybe kinda trusting me...I guess..."

- "I'm sure she does! You came back to her, you listened to her, you asked her what was wrong! You showed her that you care about her! Just this can change everything in someone's mind, this is so important because now she knows she has you on her side, ready to support her!"

- "You think?" Max pouted.

- "Of course! She obviously won't tell you everything about what she feels, but she will come to you easier."

- "I hope you're right."

- "Hey, she needs time, she has been struggling with this for years now, and, even if she says she is used to it, having people around her will encourage her to trust more in us and in herself. She just needs to get used to this instead of keeping everything for herself," Beverly explained.

Max nodded. She really hoped Bev was right. She was caring a lot about Jane and didn't want to miss something and lose her. Beverly, seeing her friend's worry, grabbed her hand and squeezed it while she was smiling to her.

- "You okay?" Bev asked.

- "Yes, yes, it's just...I'm not sure to know how to handle this, I mean, I already lives with a complicated step-father, I had Billy—"

- "Wait, are you really comparing Jane with your unhealthy family!?" Beverly frowned. "Okay, those three persons are all very angry. Neil, for an unknown reason, probably a too strict father, Billy, because of Neil who treated him like a shit, and Jane who is treated like a shit by everyone she meets. Billy treated you like a shit, but you were always telling us it was because he had a hard childhood, I still think it doesn't justify his behavior but okay, I give you that, and Jane lives with her sister, a sister she met at eleven years old, she probably had



a complicated childhood too, plus the homophobia, she is accumulating BUT the only moment she treated you very badly, it was because she was terrified to live again what happened with her ex, it was a bad idea, very clumsy, but for her it was the only way to protect herself and you from an end like this. It will be hard, she won't change in the twinkling of an eye, but if she has the good help, she can do it, and I think she wants to change. And you are not alone, you are not the only one who wants to help her, we are all here too."

- "Psychology is really your thing," Max smirked.

- "I like understanding people's emotions."

- "Yeah, I hope you're right."

- "I'm always right!"

- "Yeah, you were so right when you thought I was homophobic," Max mocked.

- "Oh shut up!" Bev chuckled, gently pushing her friend. "I never thought one second that you could be attracted to a girl."

- "So do I! It's kinda...scary."

- "Scary? Why?"

- "Because, I, I don't know what I should do, I mean, I had a boyfriend, but with a girl it's probably different, we don't do the same things with a boy than with a girl...I guess...right?"

- "I...I think you ask yourself too much questions. It's different with everyone, boys or girls. Um...you remember when Clara asked Jane about sex with a girl?"

- "I think I do, yes, why?" Max frowned.

- "Jane answered « it depends of the partner », you're not worried because it's not a boy, you're worried because you had a serious relationship with only one person who was a boy. You would stress the same if Jane was a boy," Beverly tried to reassure.

Maybe Bev was right, Max was putting too much pressure on her shoulders for nothing and was trying to find weird reasons to it. And Jane was, at least, as stressed as her about this new relationship. She lost her ex in a tragic way and was always scared to see this happening again. Max felt relieved, she just needed to talk about it with Jane and the girl would instantly reassure her.

Beverly stood and invited Max to follow her. They wandered a moment in the small town of Hawkins before arriving near the store where Jane was working. Beverly saw the green BMX and immediately watched Max. The other redhead was trying to hold her smile. Bev grabbed Max's arm before bringing her inside the shop. Jane was at the counter, doing nothing, while Joyce was tidying the rows by boredom.

- "Hi girls," the mother smiled.
- "Hi," the two girls answered at the same time.
- "You don't mind if we talk to Jane?" Bev asked.
- "No, she is all yours," Joyce smirked.

The two girls nodded to thank her and joined the other girl at the counter. Jane took support on the counter with her two hands while she was watching outside.

- "We can talk to our friend without problems Jane, don't worry," Beverly told.
- "I would like to be this sure," Jane sighed.
- "There is no one outside anyway," Max added. "You okay?"
- "Yeah, yeah...and you?" Jane answered, now looking at them.
- "We're good. You're sure you're okay? You seem...preoccupied."
- "My sister has job interviews today, I hope it will be fine."
- "I'm sure it will," Bev smiled.

Jane nodded. Max took support on the counter on her right hand. She just needed to extend her fingers to touch Jane's hand but wasn't sure she would accept it.

Bev was looking at her friend on her right and couldn't hold a smile. She wondered how no one had noticed this physical attraction between them, it was so obvious now!

Max tried. She slowly extended one of her finger and lightly caressed Jane's finger. The other girl didn't remove her hand which made smile Max. She was even blushing a bit.

- "I have an important question for you," Bev told.

Max and Jane looked at each other with the same worried frown before watching Bev.

- "With or without tongues?"

Jane wide opened her eyes while Max gave a tap on her friend's arm.

- "What?" Beverly chuckled, holding her arm. "I'm just curious!"

Jane and Max looked at each other, a little bit embarrassed.

- "What?" Bev frowned. "You...didn't...?"

Both shook their heads to say no.

- "Oh okay, why? You're both bad kissers?"

- "No!" the two girls answered like if it was an insult.

- "We just...didn't have the time," Max said.

- "In an entire evening? I don't believe you."

- "We almost did, but my sister arrived so we didn't, that's all."

- "Oh. Why are you so embarrassed? There is no shame to not kiss," Bev stated. "Unless..."

- "What?" Max frowned.

- "You both wanted it and now, you're both frustrated."
- "We can survive without kissing!"
- "Yeah, of course, and without holding hands too?" Bev rhetorically asked.

She looked down at the counter where the two girls were caressing each other fingers. Jane and Max quickly removed their hands like if it was wrong.

- "Hey no, don't stop because I'm mocking you, you know I don't care, I even find you really cute," Bev said with an apologetic tone. "Okay I've broken something, I'm sorry..."

- "Relax Bev, it's fine," Max reassured. "We won't stop holding hands because of your jokes."

- "I hope not! I would feel horrible..."

- "Don't be, we know how you are, and your jokes are kind compared to the others," Jane intervened.

- "Yeah...sorry about that..."

- "I know..."

Beverly pinched her lips together and gently grabbed Jane's hand to squeeze it.

- "When is your next date?"

- "Bev, you're too curious!" Max stated. "We didn't even talk about it!"

- "Just wondering!"

- "I want to have my sister's new schedule works before."

- "So a second date is planned," Bev told.

- "Of course! You said it yourself, we are...frustrated," Max added.

Beverly had a big smile while Max and Jane exchanged a look. The

two redheads let Jane work alone, to not get her some problems. Joyce, who listened everything, joined her co-worker with a smile.

- "So, this time everything is fine with Max."

- "Yeah, yeah...she came yesterday to talk," Jane explained.

- "It was apparently a good idea, you look happier than when you...told her to stop," Joyce smiled.

- "Yes, indeed. If you're waiting me to tell you you were right, I won't, I have too much ego," the young girl joked.

- "You don't need to, your smile says it all."

Jane playfully rolled her eyes. Joyce had a light chuckle and gave a small caress on the young girl's cheek. She was glad Jane gave a chance to Max, both seemed happy and comfortable with each other.

## 42. Sextoys

Monday morning, Dustin and Will arrived at school. They spent the week-end working on their English work for the next day and still hadn't finished it.

- "We need to go to the library after class, if it's okay?" Dustin proposed.

- "Yes, of course, we can't lose more time!" Will answered.

- "Cool, I took all we did yesterday, even if...we didn't do this much."

- "I told you to not bring Dungeon Master, it was a bad idea."

- "Yeah...but it was fun!"

- "Totally," Will smiled.

The two boys chuckled and kept walking in the halls. On their way, they saw Alban, Abigail, and the others laughing and going away, proud of them. Dustin and Will looked at each other with the same worry. They ran to Jane's locker and witnessed a new idea from her bullies. Five sextoys were glued on her locker with written « this is what you're supposed to take » on it with a drawing to explain her. They turned to see Alban and Abigail laughing in a corner with their friends behind.

- "What the fuck is wrong with you!?" Dustin got angry.

The group of teens didn't answer, too busy to laugh at their own joke. Dustin shook his head and began to took off the plastic penis of the locker, with Will.

- "God damn it, it's not even funny!" Dustin grumbled.

- "Definitely not," Will shyly answered.

- "They bought fake dicks just to humiliate Jane! That's pathetic!"

- "I know..."

Dustin stopped to clean Jane's locker, a dick still hanging on it, and turned to his friend. Will really seemed uncomfortable and even scared, but Dustin didn't know why.

- "Hey bud', what's wrong?" the curly-haired boy frowned.

- "Nothing...It's just...I, I don't know how she can handle this...if I was at her place, I don't think I would..."

- "Hey, don't worry, Jane is strong, and she can count on us, and if you were in a deep shit like this, we would all be with you."

- "Yeah...maybe not..."

- "What!? Of course we would! Why do you think we wouldn't!?"

- "Because...Jane is enough...you...you don't need to...nevermind..."

- "Hey, you can trust me buddy, what's wrong?" Dustin asked with a concerned tone.

Will looked down. He didn't know if he should tell someone, but he was trusting Dustin. Maybe he could tell him, but he didn't want to live the same thing as Jane, he wasn't as strong as her and couldn't face humiliations like that.

- "Will? Are you okay?"

- "Yeah, yeah...It's just...those kind of « jokes », they could do the same jokes for me..." Will confessed.

- "What? You're not lesbian," Dustin joked.

- "..."

Dustin's smile faded.

- "Oh shit! I'm sorry, I didn't know! I mean, I never knew it was true!"

- "What!?"

- "The nickname they use to call you, I never thought it was true...It probably had been horrible for you..." Dustin told with an apologetic

tone.

- "Yeah, indeed..." Will pouted.

- "Why didn't you tell us before? You knew it wouldn't be a problem."

- "I, I wasn't ready...and, I wasn't sure..."

- "You doubted on us?" Dustin asked with a disappointed tone.

- "I...I didn't know your opinions about this..."

- "Oh...I understand, and, it's kinda worse for boys..."

- "Yeah...Are you, are you okay with that ?" Will shyly said.

- "Hey, (wrapped his arm around his neck) of course I am! You're my friend!" Dustin smiled.

Will weakly smiled to him. He was feeling stupid to not have trusted enough his friends, they have been with him for years now, he shouldn't have doubt on them like that. They turned and saw Troy next to them, looking at Jane's locker with a pity face. Will was sure he heard what he just said to Dustin and was going to tell everyone. But Troy didn't say anything. He took off the last sextoy, grabbed the bag where all the others were, and left the two teens with an angry walk in direction of Alban and the others.

- "You have nothing better to do!?" Troy got angry.

He threw the bag at his feet and faced him, crossing his arms. Alban scoffed, surprised by his reaction, but tried to be the dominant.

- "What? You're on the dyke's side now?" Alban rhetorically asked with a provoking tone.

- "She is my friend."

- "Oh yeah!? She is your friend now!? You weren't really happy when she became a dyke!"

- "She didn't become a dyke! She was already attracted to girls, and I



already knew she was before everyone knew, but she was still my friend. You are nothing compared to her, ALL OF YOU are nothing, I can't believe you right now, you spent all of your time and energy finding new ways to humiliate her, you are all miserable!" Troy angrily stated.

- "Oh yeah!?" (pushes him) WE are your friends Troy, you are nothing without us, do you hear me!?"

Troy grabbed Alban by his jacket and blocked him against the lockers behind him. He always knew that Alban was a piece of shit but now, he was going too far with Jane, him and all the others. Abigail was watching her dreams' boyfriend being mad at her best friend. She didn't understand why Troy was always defending this slut, she had nothing better than her!

- "Leave her alone now," Troy told, gritting his teeth and crushing his body against Alban's. "It's not an ask, it's an order."

- "You're really threatening me!?" Alban chuckled, not believing him.

- "Exactly, it's exactly what I'm doing."

Alban lost his smile. He saw in Troy's eyes that he was more than serious. Troy stared a moment at his ex friend to be sure he understood what he said, he was tired to see Jane sad and terrified to go to school. He let him go and walked away.

- "This bitch totally bewitched him!" Abigail angrily told, frustrated to not be in the center of his attention.

- "Yeah, he is not the same since she is here!" Alban angrily added. "He would have never done that to me before!"

- "Clearly! We need to get rid of her, before it's too late."

Alban and Abigail shared the same angry look before shaking their hands like if they were sealing a pact.

When Jane arrived at school, Dustin and Will were in front of her locker. When she looked at it, she noticed it was wet but preferred saying nothing. Something was probably tagged, but the two boys

washed it before she arrived to not let her see, and she was appreciating it.

- "What's up Jane?" Dustin smiled.

- "Nothing," the girl shrugged.

She opened her locker but, this time, no papers fell. She had a relieved and shaking sigh which the boys noted. They shared to same sad look, and Dustin understood better why Will never talked about his homosexuality, seeing Jane living that was really hard to witness, just opening her locker was hard for her!

- "You don't need to babysit me you know," Jane mumbled.

- "We know, we just like to be with you," Will told.

Jane looked up and nodded. She perceived Max approaching them and managed to hold her smile.

- "Hey guys, what's up?" the redhead greeted.

- "Nothing," Dustin answered.

- "Can I talk to you?" Jane asked.

- "Of course, what's wrong?" Max answered.

- "Um...privately, I would prefer. You know...girls' problems."

- "Oh!" the two boys exclaimed with worried faces.

- "We leave you alone, see you in class," Dustin said.

The two boys quickly walked away under the amused looks of Jane and Max.

- "So, you really have a girls' problem?" frowned Max frowned.

- "No," Jane chuckled. "My sister works late on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, if you want to finish the work."

- "The work? (looks around and gets closer to Jane) Is it a secret

code?" the redhead murmured.

- "(Gets closer to Max) Yes it is," the brunette smiled. "So? What do you think? We don't have to do it this week, I just wanted to let you know."

- "Um, okay, Spy Jane," Max mocked.

- "What? It's safer like that."

- "Yeah, if you think so, I like the idea. Why not on Wednesday? If you're free."

- "I am."

- "And what are we going to do?"

- "I don't know. We could go to see a movie and eat somewhere, let's be classic!"

- "Okay, I like being classic."

The two girls nodded with a smile. They began to walk in direction of their History class. Max was impressed by Jane's change, she literally talked about their second date in public without shaking too much. Okay, she used a code, which was cute, but it was still in the middle of the school where everyone could hear them.

They entered the class and separated to both join their seats. Beverly turned to her friend and looked insistently to her. Max rolled her eyes and leaned to whisper in her ear:

- "Wednesday night."

Bev smirked and nodded like an approbation. She watched Jane and gave her a thumb up. The girl, at the opposite of them, had a small chuckle and shook her head.

Mr. Smith entered the class, forcing the teens to shut up and to face him. He asked them to open their books at the page 394 to do the exercise. When Jane opened hers, she had an horrible surprise inside and closed it quickly. She heard someone trying to cover his laugh on

her right. It was obviously Alban who did that and wasn't even trying to hide it. Jane wanted to cry, she couldn't open her book, the teacher would probably notice it and asked her in front of everyone, and she had no proof it was Alban even if she was convinced it was him. She froze, not knowing what to do. She couldn't run away, it would be ridiculous, she couldn't cry, it would embarrass her more, and she couldn't yell at Alban, she would sound crazy. She had no solution and sh-

- "Miss Brown?" Mr. Smith interrupted.

Jane looked up at him and noticed that the entire class was looking at her with the same interrogative frown.

- "Is there a problem?"

- "No," Jane pouted. "No, everything is fine."

- "Why don't you open your book?"

- "Yeah Jane, why don't you open your book?" Alban asked with a proud smile.

Jane stayed stupid. She had no valid arguments to explain her closed book, but Alban bragging just confirm what she already knew. The teacher approached her, and the young girl felt her cheeks blushing of embarrassment, trying to hide in her jacket and looking away. Mr. Smith opened it and had a smile on his face, he even chuckled.

- "Is this your idea, Mr. Johnson?" the teacher asked with a big smile and showing the book to everyone.

Jane's History's book pages were covered of pictures of naked guys or just dicks sometimes with some things written too, which made laugh some people of the class. The party was outraged by Mr. Smith's reaction, he laughed at this humiliation and even encouraged it!

- "Yeah, it is," Alban proudly answered with a big smile.

- "Only you?"

- "Only me."

- "Good, I think the headmaster will be happy to know you damaged one of your colleague's book just for fun," the teacher told seriously this time.

Alban's stupid smile faded, and the class stopped laughing. Jane looked up at the teacher with a frown, not sure to understand what was happening.

- "What!?" Alban exclaimed, raising his arms like if he was innocent.

- "You heard me. Oh, and don't forget the book, it's yours now."

Mr. Smith gave the book to the blonde boy before taking Alban's book and giving it to Jane. One of the students took Alban and Jane to the headmaster to explain what happened. For once, Jane had no punishment, but Alban was really mad, and Jane was worried about the futur. This boy was really hating her, and she didn't know if it was just because she was lesbian.

- "I won't give you all my books," Alban said with a threatening tone.

Jane had a bad shiver and a bad feeling. The first period wasn't over so the halls were empty. She went to her locker and quickly opened it. Math book : full of porns, English book : full of porns, Mechanics book : full of porns! All her books were full of naked men! She thought she was going to explode and threw all her books on the floor, kicking them and trampling on them before collapsing against her locker and sitting on the floor, breathing heavily.

The bell rang, and Jane hadn't moved from her locker. The teens around looked at her like if she was crazy while some even walked on her stuff or laughed at her. But she didn't care, she was tired of all this shit.

A pair of legs stopped in front of her, but she didn't look up, not caring of who was there.

- "Um...we can share the English book if you want."

Jane looked up and saw Troy.

- "I mean, I don't think yours is...usable."

Jane just nodded. Troy held out his hand and helped her to stand. The girl didn't know why suddenly Troy was talking to her, but she missed him and wouldn't blame him for being rude. She had been rude too with her friends, so she could understand. And English would be surmountable now.

### 43. "The work"

It was the end of the day, and Jane was alone in her apartment. Not really alone. Constance found a kitty cat in the middle of the road and decided to bring him back at home. So now, there was her and this small cat in the kitchen. A knock at her door cut her in a game with her cat. She took him in her arms and went to open the door.

- "Hey, you have a cat?" Max frowned.

- "Yeah, since yesterday," Jane answered with a small voice and playing with the cat's paw.

- "It's not really surprising for two lesbians to have a pussy," the redhead joked.

- "Ew Max, you just ruined my cat," the brunette chuckled.

- "Sorry, it was too tempting."

- "I understand, I would have probably done the same joke if I were you. You can enter if you want, we have time before the movie begins."

Max nodded and entered. Jane was still playing with the cat which amused Max. The two girls went in the kitchen, Jane feeding the cat while Max was just standing there, listening to Jane talking about her new friend. His name was Cat, because her and her sister thought it was funny, he liked to play with Jane's baseball's ball and had some cute meows.

- "Can I ask you something?" Max said.

- "Sure, (stands and faces her) what is it ?" Jane smiled.

- "Uh...you're gonna find it weird."

- "Just ask Max, I won't mock you."

- "You don't mind if...we kiss before going? Because I'll think about it all night and I'll stress and I don't want to stress for a kiss so..."

- "Okay, I think it's a good idea," Jane smirked.

Max thought it would relieve her, but she began to stress more. The first kiss was so abrupt that she didn't have time to worry but now, it seemed like if it was prepared, she had days to think about it, to wonder how to kiss a girl, if it was different than boys and if she would be good at it. You can't really prepare a kiss, nothing really happened the way it was planned.

- "Relax, if you don't like it you just have to push me, I won't force you," Jane reassured.

Jane was stressing too. She knew how to kiss a girl, but she wondered if Max would like it or not, maybe she would realise that she was not interested in girls.

Jane gently placed her hands on the other girl's cheeks while Max placed hers on Jane's waist. Jane slowly approached, their faces at a few millimeters now. Max didn't remember to have been this close to her since they knew each other. Their foreheads were now against each other with their noses touching. Jane leaned her face closer to the other girl who did the same. They finally connected their lips. Max felt an explosion in her stomach, like if there were fireworks inside. She grabbed more firmly Jane's waist, getting her closer to her, feeling the other girl's body's heat. Her entire body was tensing and getting warm of excitement. The kiss became more passionate, and Jane's hands began to travel in her hair and neck, increasing the butterflies in her stomach.

Jane slowly leaned back to break the kiss, placing her forehead against Max's. The redhead opened her eyes, a smile on her lips, and watched the girl in front of her. Max had a fast breathing, but Jane seemed sad and worried, her eyes were still closed, she was biting her bottom lip on her left and her hands were a bit shaking.

- "It was this bad?" Max asked to relax her.

- "No," Jane lightly chuckled. "I'm just moving on, it's hard."

Max had a soft smile. She gently grabbed Jane's shaking hands and moved them on her waist while Max put her hands on Jane's cheeks.



- "I'm sorry..." Jane apologized. "I, I don't want to ruin everything..."

- "Ssssh," Max calmly said. "It's fine, I understand."

The redhead placed Jane's head on her shoulder and hugged her tight. Jane wrapped her arms around Max's body and took a deep breath. She was moving on, by having feelings for another girl. She was still feeling horrible to be like that, a part of her was still thinking it was cheating but another part thought it had to happen, being in love and being loved was a need.

- "I'm proud of you," Max whispered in her ear.

- "Thank you," Jane murmured.

Max rubbed Jane's back before breaking the hug. The redhead let her hands on Jane's shoulders while the other girl's hands were on Max's waist.

- "I'm sorry, I didn't even ask you how you felt about the kiss," Jane told with a weak smile.

- "I, I can't put words of what I felt, it was...I don't know, probably the best first kiss I've never had!"

- "I'm not that good."

- "Yes you are! I mean, I had felt things when I kissed Gary before but it wasn't this...strong, I don't know how to explain that!"

- "Well, I'm sorry to tell you that, but I think you're gay."

- "Just for you," Max smirked.

Jane had an amused smile. The two girls kissed the small cat before leaving the apartment. While Jane was closing her door, Max asked :

- "Wait, does that mean we are...girlfriends?"

- "Um...if you want, I have nothing against it," Jane answered, closing the door.

- "Okay...Cool," Max smiled. "I should ask you? To be my...girlfriend, no?"

- "You want me to be your girlfriend?"

- "I...I would love to."

- "And I want to be yours, so yeah, I think we are girlfriends."

Max's smile grew more on her face. She gave a small kiss on Jane's lips like to thank her to be so understanding.

As Max asked her mother if she could take her car, they didn't have to take the bus to the mall.

- "It's the first time I'll see you driving!" Jane said with excitement, sitting in the passenger's seat.

- "You know, I've been driving since I'm twelve," Max said, sitting next to Jane.

- "Really?"

- "(starts the car and begins to drive) Yep, I've even... « borrowed » my step-brother's car once."

- "Ouh Max, you're a bad girl," Jane jested.

- "More than you think," the redhead joked.

- "Why did you need his car?"

- "It was Lucas's birthday, but Neil didn't want me to go to a party with more boys than girls."

- "I...really don't like this man."

- "So do I!" Max chuckled. "I had been punished for three months, I wasn't allowed to go anywhere except school."

- "Three months!? It must have been long!"

- "Not if you're good at sneaking out," Max smirked.

- "You challenged the authority! I love this!"
- "You never did? I mean, sneaking out when your sister didn't want you to go out?"
- "No, she is not an abusive asshole like your step-father!" Jane stated with a light tone.
- "Yeah, it makes sense", Max giggled. "When is your birthday?"
- "It was yesterday."
- "What!? Oh no! I missed it! Why didn't you tell me?"
- "I don't really like celebrating my birthday, I prefer doing it with my sister and a cake, I don't need more."
- "I could have at least wished you a happy birthday! And I could have buy you something."
- "No, don't buy me something, you already bought me an entire wardrobe, I don't want you to become homeless because of me," Jane chuckled.
- "Why you don't like your birthday? It's kinda weird."
- "I know, it's just...the only good birthdays I had were with just my sister."
- "You don't think you would have a cool birthday with all of us?"
- "Maybe, but I don't really like to be the center of the attention."
- "Okay, I can understand that. Can I wish you a late happy birthday?"
- "Of course," Jane smiled.
- "Then, happy birthday, old woman."
- "I'm just one year older than you!"
- "You will still be older than me, forever," Max giggled. "And I'll be

seventeen in just a few weeks so..."

- "But I'm not seventeen, I'm eighteen."

- "You are a Cougar!" the redhead mocked.

- "Yeah, and I love that!"

The two girls laughed while they were arriving. Max parked the car not far from the mall. Even if it was Wednesday night, there were still lots of people hanging out. They arrived at the movie theater, took a bucket of pop-corn and some chocolate bars and went to their seats, waiting for the movie « Off Limits » to begin. Max wasn't surprised that Jane chose this movie, two cops trying to solve a mysterious investigation, every cops dreamt of that, even those who weren't cop yet apparently. While the room was filling, Jane tried to aim Max's mouth with pop-corn.

- "If you choke, I can't save you, I prefer telling you," Jane joked.

- "Then aim right!" Max mocked.

Right after that, Jane missed her throw and the pop-corn finished in Max's eyes. The brunette couldn't hold her laugh and had trouble to stop while Max was rubbing her red and wet eye and lightly chuckling with Jane.

After the movie, the bucket was full of papers of their chocolate bars. Max went to the bin to throw it and, when she came back to Jane, she could tell by her face that she didn't like but loved the movie. She had a big smile and was daydreaming.

- "Let me guess," Max began, "it excited you more to become a cop ?"

- "Exact!" Jane answered with a bigger smile.

- "You are not scared?"

- "No, why?"

- "Because I am!"

- "I thought you wanted to become a cooker?" Jane frowned.
- "Yeah, but, I will be worried for you," Max told.
- "Oh no !" the brunette firmly exclaimed. "I'm the one who worries in the relation, if you begin to worry we are screwed!"
- "I'm not as extrem as you," the redhead mocked. "I worry for my friends, my family, and you, it's normal."
- "Okay, but don't worry more, we will die of a heart attack at twenty years old," Jane joked.
- "Yeah, which means, you before me, Cougar."

Jane gently pushed her while she was chuckling. Max was impressed by Jane's mood today, she was relax and comfy. Even if she was stressed, she managed to have fun, and the redhead was glad she did, it was the goal. And it was probably because Max didn't try anything which could embarrass her, like holding her hand during the movie or wrapping her waist with her arm.

At the last floor, they arrived at the restaurant « George's ». It was not an expensive restaurant, not luxurious, many students had the habits to eat here sometimes. Jane chose a steak with french fries and Max chose gnocchi with a cheese sauce. While they were eating, Max noticed that Jane was looking a lot to her plate and gave her some, but only if she could take some french fries. Jane didn't hesitate and accepted. She loved too much cheese and pastas to resist to the redhead's plate. For the dessert, Jane took a chocolate mousse while Max took a cheesecake.

- "You want your own restaurant?" Jane asked with chocolate around her mouth.
- "Of course! I've even a menu with a plate dedicated to all of you," Max smiled, wiping her girlfriend's face.
- "Really? Even me?"
- "Is it a real question? Of course, you will be a dessert, I just need to find what now."

- "So cool, I can't wait to eat my dessert everyday!"

- "Cool, you will have diabetes like that," the redhead joked.

Jane winced at her while she was chuckling. Max paid the dinner and brought back Jane to her apartment. The brunette invited the redhead to come inside a small moment.

- "Hey Caaaaat !" Jane happily said, taking the small cat in her arms.

- "You love this animal more than me," Max stated with a joking tone.

- "Yes!" Jane affirmed.

Max pushed gently her head with an amused smile. Jane proposed her if she wanted something to drink, but it was already late, and the redhead didn't want her mom or Neil to lecture her because she hung out during the week. Jane leaned and gave a tender kiss on Max's lips. The redhead got surprised but accepted it with no hesitation.

- "Thank you," Jane said after having broken the kiss.

- "Thank you too," Max answered with a small blush on her cheeks. "I see you tomorrow."

- "Yep, be careful on the road."

Max left Jane's apartment with a big satisfaction inside her but mostly butterflies in her stomach.

## 44. Apologies

Dustin and Will were entering the school together. Since Will came out to his friend, he was feeling a bit more confident and comfortable, especially with him. And, apparently, Troy didn't tell anyone, which relieved the young boy. But seeing him at his locker stressed him. He stopped while Dustin was still walking until he turned to look at him.

- "Hey bud', what's wrong?" the curly-haired boy frowned.

Will showed him with his chin.

- "Don't worry, I'll be with you."

Will pinched his lips together and nodded. The two boys approached his locker, Dustin ready to reply with his arms crossed.

- "Um...Hi," Troy shyly said.

- "What do you want!?" Dustin sharply asked.

- "I...I wanted to apologize to you and to Will..."

The two frowned to each other before looking at Troy again.

- "I, I know I've been a real asshole with you, I've, I've insulted you and humiliated you just...to be accepted by the wrong persons. I have no excuses for what I've done and I'm sorry for taking you away your confidence and for treating you like if...you were nothing...I don't expect you to forgive me, I just wanted to apologize...um...thank you for listening..."

Troy cleared his throat one last time, more by embarrassment than by necessity, before leaving the two boys.

- "It was...weird," Dustin stated.

- "Uh...yeah, yeah, it was!" Will frowned.

A bit further, Mike and Max were arriving near them with the same

confused faces.

- "Did Troy apologize to you?" Max asked.

- "Yeah! You too?" Dustin answered.

- "Yes, what happened?" Mike frowned. "I mean, why now?"

- "I think it's because of Jane," Will intervened. "Monday morning, there were sextoys on her locker, we took them off and Troy took them and went to Alban and yelled at him."

- "Really!?" Mike and Max exclaimed with the same surprised tone.

- "Yes, he seemed really mad!"

Max and Mike found nothing to answer, they just nodded. On their way to their classes, they saw Beverly and Lucas listening to Troy. Both seemed as surprised and lost as them when they heard him. When Troy had finished, the redhead and the black boy joined their friends.

- "Did Troy apologize to you?" Beverly frowned.

- "Yes," the four others answered.

- "It's...weird," Lucas said.

- "It's probably because of Jane, he likes her more than Alban," Mike told.

- "Yeah maybe...well, at least he is not a problem anymore!" Bev stated.

The group nodded, all agreeing with this. They didn't know Troy's real motivations but he seemed sincere and would probably stop bothering them. While the boys were ahead of the group, debating about a new game, Bev and Max were walking behind them, murmuring.

- "So? How was it yesterday?" Bev asked with a low voice.



- "It was great, we had a lot of fun and she was very relax," Max explained with a smile.

- "It's cool, you know what that mean? She is feeling great with you, it's a good thing."

- "Yeah, maybe, but I don't know if it will be always like that, maybe she was just in a good day."

- "(rolls her eyes) Can you stop being so pessimistic? You spent a good night, she spent a good night, that's all that matter!"

- "Yeah you're right, it was a good night."

After their morning, the party and Jane met at the lunch table with the same orange paper in their hands.

- "It's a party, you're going?" Mike asked, sitting next to Jane.

- "Nope, I don't like parties," the girl answered.

- "Really? Why?" frowned Dustin.

- "Too much people which means too much possible problems, and those people are not my friends, it would be weird if I would go to their house to dance and drink whereas I don't like them."

- "It's...a good reason," Will stated.

- "But if we go, you come?" Lucas insisted.

- "I, I don't know..."

- "It's on a Friday, you are all free," Beverly remarked.

- "Yeah, but I prefer staying at home, it's not very my thing."

- "Don't force her, if she doesn't want, she doesn't want!" Max intervened.

- "Yeah, we know, but it would be better if she would be there, that's all," Mike told. "You have one week and one day to think about it."

- "Okay!" Jane grumbled.

Jane wasn't a party girl. The only parties she went was to find some girls, but the atmosphere was a bit oppressive and if you don't drink, like her, it could become really boring. But Mike and the others didn't seem to be the kind to drink until coma, so why not, she would think about it.

- "Jane," Will called. "Did you ask Troy to apologize?"

- "Apologize?" Jane frowned. "For?"

- "For bullying us."

- "He did!?"

- "Um, yes, this morning."

- "Cool, it's a good thing, right?"

- "Yeah, of course, it was just...surprising," Lucas told. "I don't know what you did to him but he changed."

- "I don't think I have something to do with it."

- "Are you kidding!?" Mike intervened. "Since the sextoys on your locker-"

- "Sextoys!? What sextoys!?" Jane frowned.

The other members of the party killed him with their eyes while the black-haired boy was red of embarrassment and didn't know what to answer.

- "This is what was on my locker on Monday, right?"

They all nodded, embarrassed. Jane didn't say anything, she kept eating like if it was normal. She didn't seem embarrassed or anxious, just not surprised.

- "You're not mad?" Dustin asked.

- "No, ruining my books was worse, at least I didn't see the sextoys

thanks to you, so...I think it's fine."

Will and Dustin smiled to each other, a bit proud of them. Thanks to them, she had less stress. On their way to their classes, Jane met Troy and decided to go to him.

- "Hey, I've heard you apologised, it's great," the girl smiled.

- "Um yeah, I did," Troy answered. "And I would like to apologize to you too, to make you feel bad about your...you know."

- "Homosexuality?" Jane said with an amused smile. "It's not a bad word, you can say it."

- "Yeah, sorry. Anyway, I hope Alban and the others will stop bothering you."

- "I hope too, but I don't think so..."

- "Yeah...me neither...but if you need anything, I'm here for you."

- "Thanks. It won't be too hard in the Football team now?"

- "Maybe, but I probably won't stay in the team," Troy told.

- "Really? Why?"

- "Because someone made me realize it wasn't something I really liked," the young boy smirked.

Jane smiled too. She remembered the conversation they had had in the bus during their school trip and was happy his friend was beginning to think about himself than what the others could think of him.

## 45. Fight

It was the moment of sport, and Will was really uncomfortable, as usual, in the changing room. A group of boys kept looking at him with mocking smile.

- "Hey Queer," one of them called, "why you don't change with the dyke? At least nothing could happen between you, but here...we don't want to see you having a boner!"

The entire room laughed while Will was trying to change as fast as possible to join his friends outside.

- "Can you leave him alone!?" Troy angrily snapped.

- "Dude! (approaches to him) You have a crush on Willy Queer now?" the guy mocked. "Or it's your stupid crush on Jane which talks for you!?"

- "Jane is my friend, and Will...is a nice guy," Troy stated, gritting his teeth and closing his fists.

The two boys stared at each other, nostrils dilated, torsos forward, fists closed. It was at the first one who cracked. And it was the other boy, Derek, who pushed Troy. Troy answered with a more brutal push and they continued like that until they began to punch each other. The boys around were encouraging them to fight to entertain them while Will was just hoping to not receive a punch in his face by accident. The two boys were in the middle of the room, punching with hate the other one, not caring of their own wounds. The sound of the brawl alerted the teacher who grabbed the two boys by their tee-shirts and forced them to stop. Will joined Max and Jane on the field while the teacher was yelling at Troy and Derek, surrounded by the other students.

- "What happened?" Max frowned.

- "Troy had a fight with Derek," Will explained still not believing it.

- "What? But why?" Jane asked, surprised.

- "Because...Derek was...mocking me and Troy intervened."

Max frowned more. Why Troy was defending him whereas he spent those last years humiliating him? And why now? What happened to him? Did he have something in his mind? Like a plan to humiliate them more? She turned to her girlfriend who had a proud smile on her face. Maybe he was changing, and Jane was at the origin of it.

- "You have a good influence on him," Max stated with difficulties.

- "I don't think, he realised himself he wasn't the boy he was showing," Jane said. "You don't think people can change?"

- "Of course I do, but I won't trust him because he fought for Will once."

- "Give him a chance."

- "I'll try," the redhead sighed.

Jane knew it was hard for Max to accept that Troy, their bully, was changing, and she didn't want to force her to like him. She gave a small smile to calm her upset. Max tried to resist, but Jane's smile had the talent to make her melt and smile. She shook her head and playfully rolled her eyes which made chuckle Jane.

- "What?" Jane asked with a big smile.

- "Don't think you can get everything you want with your beautiful smile," Max said with a low voice and a fake threatening tone.

Jane smiled more in her direction to provoke her. Max smiled too and tried to hide the other girl's smile by placing her hand on it, but Jane was trying to escape.

- "Can you stop?" the redhead giggled.

Jane effectively stopped, but not because Max asked, because the other teens of the class were joining them, and she didn't want them to see them interacting like that. Max pouted when she saw Jane's anxious face reappearing. She wanted to reassure her, to tell her that no one would care but even her wasn't believing it.

- "Do you think he will have problems?" Will asked.
- "I don't know, he is the captain of the Football team so maybe not," Jane answered.
- "Yeah..."
- "You asked that because you want him to have problems or you are worried he could have problems ?" Max frowned.
- "I...I don't know...Maybe I don't want him to have problems..."
- "Really!?"
- "He defended me, and he apologized."
- "He still treated you like a shit!"
- "I know! I just...I like thinking that people can change, I'm not telling he will become my best friend, but...why not turning the page and putting this in the past?"
- "You are more lenient than me!"
- "Yeah...Maybe I'm too lenient."
- "You don't have an opinion on this?" Max asked to Jane.
- "Um...no, I mean, I don't know what happened between him and all of you, I'm just happy he is changing," Jane said.
- "He is the one who gave us those nicknames, even if mine is not painful, theirs are awful, I mean, you heard Bev's one! You can't ignore that!"
- "I'm not ignoring that! Bev's story is awful and using it to humiliate her and reminding her this part of her life is pathetic and miserable!" the brunette got angry.

Both Max and Will got surprised by this sudden anger. Even Jane was surprised, she didn't know why she was taking it like that, she had always been against bullies, but she always thought some of them

were just trying to not be the bullied, and Troy was one of them.

- "I'm sorry," Jane apologized breathing heavily. "I, I don't know why I reacted like that...I didn't want..."

- "It's okay Jane, we all have our limits and apparently me hating Troy is your limit," Max joked to relax her.

- "And Bev's story is...I mean, everyone should be mad about this, it's an understandable anger," Will added.

- "Yeah, maybe..." Jane said calmer than before. "It came so fast, like a peak!"

- "Maybe you should talk about this with someone," Max told. "It's a hard story, it touches everyone in different ways, and you, it gets you angry."

Jane nodded. Maybe they were right, she needed to talk about it with someone, her sister, she would understand why she was this angry about this. The teacher called everyone and Jane walked to listen to him, Will and Max behind.

- "I think she had been abused," Will said.

- "Me too," Max answered.

## 46. The party

One week passed, and Jane hadn't problems, which surprised her. She wondered if they weren't preparing something stronger and worse. She had more dates with Max, and the redhead was comfier now, which was making the brunette happy. But, for now, she was in direction of the house of a person she didn't know. Mike and the others insisted for her to come at this big party, but she didn't really want to go, she would have preferred staying in her couch, watching TV, and finishing the burger she began the day before. But nooo, she accepted to go to this stupid party. She would stay an hour and then go back to her apartment as fast as possible. Her friends were already in front of it, waiting for her. The house was big with a loud music inside, some teens were doing alcohol games inside, some already drunk or high.

- "Hey Jane," Will greeted.

- "You made it!" Dustin joked.

- "Yeah, whou," Jane answered with no enthusiasm.

- "Oh whaou, calm down Jane, we are not inside yet," Max sarcastically told.

The others laughed while Jane winced at her with a small smile. Lucas made a movement with his head to invite them to go inside. The music was louder than Jane thought even if from the outside it was already loud. Teens were dancing and jumping while screaming the lyrics when there were some, shoving everyone around. Jane was trying to follow her friends, protecting herself with her arms. Beverly, who was in front of her, looked behind and saw her friend's distress. She had a small amused sigh, grabbed her arm, and placed her in front of her, placing her hands on her shoulders.

- "YOU OKAY?" Bev loudly asked because of the music.

- "I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T LIKE PARTIES!" Jane grumbled, uncomfortable.



- "WE ARE LOOKING FOR A QUIET PLACE!"

Jane kept grumbling with her hands which made chuckle the redhead behind her. After a long travel, they finally reached the living room with, surprisingly, no one in the couch. They didn't hesitate and sat on it and in the armchairs around. Bev on the right of the couch, then Jane, Max, and finally Mike, Lucas and Will were in the same armchair at the left of Mike, and Dustin in their left on a chair.

- "See, it's quiet," Bev smiled.

- "Not that much," Jane kept growling.

- "You're so grumpy sometimes," Max mocked.

- "I hate parties."

- "Yeah, we know."

- "Why did you force me to come then!?"

- "I didn't force you! We asked you if you wanted to come, that's all!"

- "Mike bothered me all week to come!"

- "Mike is a bitch."

- "Hey!" the boy exclaimed next to them. "You know I can hear you at this distance!"

- "Yeah, I know!" Max chuckled.

Mike gently pushed her which made her push her two friends on her right and made Jane grumble a bit more.

- "You're cute when you growl," Max murmured to her ear.

- "Good, 'cause I do it often," Jane said.

Max made a movement to kiss Jane's cheek, but she remembered they were in public with almost the entire school and leaned back. Bev looked at her with her eyebrows raised and a small and amused smile while Max was pouting, a bit frustrated. Luckily, no one except

Bev and Jane noticed her almost contact with her girlfriend. Bev hugged Jane which surprised the girl.

- "What are you doing!?" Jane frowned.
- "I'm hugging you, as Max can't," Bev answered.
- "Stop it, you could have problems."

Bev sighed, she slowly broke the hug and gave a quick kiss on her cheek. The boys all noticed that and got closer to each other to talk more privately.

- "Do you think Bev and Jane are dating?" Dustin asked.
- "I don't know, they seem really close," Lucas stated.
- "Maybe it's just a flirt," Will told.
- "I don't think, I saw them a lot together, not just in class," Mike said.
- "It could be a good thing, like that Jane could assume more herself," Lucas told.

All the boys nodded, all agreeing. They leaned back to talk with the girls too. Dustin and Lucas stood to bring some things to eat and a drink to each one. During the party, the group of friends had been joined by Gabrielle and Clara. But what Jane saw was stressing her. Alban and Abigail were a bit further, murmuring things and giving some quick looks to her.

- "I'm sure they are preparing something," Jane stated.
- "You're sure you're not paranoid?" Bev joked.
- "No, I'm not."

Beverly watched the two teens and realised that maybe Jane wasn't paranoid. The two seemed suspects. And they were more suspects when, with more teens, they approached the party and surrounded them.

- "Hey losers," Abigail said with a mocking tone.

They all frowned except Jane who was trying to sink in the couch. Troy, who was a bit further, approached them when he saw what was happening.

- "Don't worry, we are not here for everyone, just...Jane," the cheerleader smirked.

- "What don't you just go fuck yourself!?" Mike replied.

- "Shut up Frog Face, no one asked you to croak," Alban ordered.

- "Dude, what's happening?" Troy intervened.

- "(wraps his arm around Troy and brings him closer to them) It's for you my friend, (points at Jane) this bitch is just another slut who is waiting the right dick!"

- "What!? Stop that, it's ridiculous!" Troy got angry, pushing his ex-friend.

- "That's what we will see!"

Alban gave two taps on Troy's shoulder before walking to Jane. Some of his friends grabbed Max and the others to be sure they won't bother him. Alban placed his knees on each Jane's side, his member at the level of her face. He had a dirty laugh, supported by his friends around while Troy and the party was struggling and yelling at him to stop. But Alban wasn't listening, he plunged his hand in his underwear and began to touch himself. Jane was strangely calm. She looked up at him with dark eyes while he was bragging to his friends who were encouraging him.

She gave a headbutt between his legs, crushing his hand against his dick and balls. The boy screamed of pain and got off the couch with difficulties. Jane didn't stop here, she stood, grabbed his wrist and twisted his arm in his back. She wrapped her other arm around his neck and tightened. Alban was struggling to put off her arm around his neck but his face was becoming red, looking for air.

- "Do you really think you are the first one who did this to me!?" Jane

angrily said in his ear. "Do you really think no one tried before you!?"

The others around were shocked by this scene, Jane's friends a bit proud and happy to see Alban in such position. But they began to wonder if she was going to kill him. His face was becoming blue, his eyes were bulging and red and his arms seemed weak.

- "Jane, don't kill him," Max calmly intervened.

Jane clenched her jaw but finally released him. Alban fell on the floor and took a deep breath, not able to say a word. Abigail was killing her with her eyes, her plan totally failed and she was determined to hurt her more than before. Jane didn't say anything, she took her bag and left the party. Everyone just did the same, still shocked about this.

## 47. Crazy?

As Jane left the party before everyone, Max hadn't the opportunity to talk to her and see how she was. But she knew she was working on Saturday and decided to go to the store. When she entered, she had the surprise to see some customers. Joyce was at the counter and Jane between the rows. She saluted the woman and went near Jane.

- "Max!? What are you doing here!?" asked Jane asked with a low voice and looking around.

- "Stop acting like if we just robbed a bank!" Max lightly grumbled, a bit amused.

- "There are people here."

- "I saw! I just wanted to know how you were about yesterday!"

- "I'm mad. You probably think I'm crazy now!"

- "No, I just think they are crazy and you defended yourself, I mean, I, I don't know how far he could have gone," Max told, still shaken up.

- "Me neither," Jane pouted. "You're not scared of me?"

- "Should I?"

- "I hope not..."

Max put her hand on Jane's arm and squeezed it but the other girl was not really okay with this and brutally freed herself, looking uncomfortably around. Max understood why she was so distant in public, what happened the day before was completely scary and could sadly happen to anyone. But a part of her wanted to assume her relation with Jane, to show everyone she was happy with her! But Jane knew more than anyone the risks it took, and she didn't want to lose her. Jane rubbed her face, she had dark circles, she seemed to not have slept for a while!

- "You work too much, you're gonna kill yourself if you continue," Max told.

- "No, I'm fine, don't worry," Jane answered.
- "You can't take your next Saturday?"
- "Why?"
- "You know, « to work », " Max joked. "I thought we could spend the day together, without worrying about your schedule."
- "Um...I, I don't know..."
- "If you don't want, it's okay, I understand," the redhead said.
- "No, it's not that, it's just...Jerry already doesn't like me, if I ask a free day he will hate me more!"
- "Okay, it's as you want, but you barely see him, so I don't think it will have a huge consequence on you. And I'm sure Joyce will be fine with this idea."
- "I can try, I guess," shrugged Jane. "What do you have in your mind?"
- "Oh, nothing in particular, I just want to spend a day with you, doing nothing. Not the entire day, I'll leave you when your sister is home."

Jane had a soft look and a soft smile for her. She liked the idea to spend a day doing nothing with her, she clearly needed to take some rest and it was probably the only opportunity she had.

- "Okay, I'll ask Joyce, if it's possible and then Jerry."
- "Cool, you keep me in touch," Max smiled.
- "Of course."
- "What do you want to ask me?"

The two girls started and turned to see Joyce behind them.

- "Um...I, I wanted to know if I could have my next Saturday..." Jane shyly answered, looking down.

- "Of course," Joyce smiled, "you worked more than you are supposed to! Take your Saturday, I'll talk to Jerry."

- "Thank you."

The woman nodded and went back to her work. Max turned to Jane with a « I told you » look.

- "Don't look at me like that," Jane said, pushing gently her girlfriend.

- "Like what?" Max smirked.

- "You know what I mean."

- "I'm just noting that I'm always right, that's all."

Jane shook her head and playfully rolled her eyes which made chuckle Max. The redhead gave a small caress on Jane's cheek before letting her at her work. On her way home, she saw Lucas and Gabrielle who were coming to her.

- "Hey MadMax," Lucas greeted with a big smile.

- "Hey, what are you guys doing?" the redhead asked.

- "Just hanging out, and you?"

- "I was with Jane at the store."

- "Oh! How is she?" Gabrielle quickly asked.

- "Kinda good, she was scared we thought she was crazy."

- "God no! It was super cool!"

Lucas and Max frowned at each other before looking at the black-haired girl.

- "What? It was super cool..."

- "She almost choked him. You don't think it's extrem?" Lucas said.

- "I think what Alban was going to do would have been extrem, and

she didn't want to kill him, she just wanted to be sure he couldn't do it again," Gabrielle explained. "Abigail and Alban are insane, not Jane, her eyes were angry, but she was in total control of the situation. You both thought it was extrem?"

- "Absolutely not!" Max and Lucas answered at the same time.

- "Why did you look at me like if I was crazy then?" Gabrielle frowned.

- "We were not expecting such excitement, that's all," Max told with a smile.

- "Okay...I'm glad she is not alone in this, she needs support."

- "You like Jane, don't you?" Lucas stated, wrapping his arm around her.

- "She reminds me a friend I had, she finished alone..."

- "Oh...I'm sorry..."

- "Yeah, not a happy story...Anyway, with you around her, I don't think it will end bad."

- "We won't let that happen," Max said.

Gabrielle nodded, like if she was relieved. Max let the two lovebirds finishing their hang out and went back in direction of her home. Gabrielle seemed to have lived something similar and to have lost this person in horrible circumstances. At least, she was sincere with Jane, and Max appreciated a lot that, it was a necessary support.



## 48. Pussy

It was Monday morning, and Jane was stressing about school. She knew she went too far last Friday night at the party, Alban had too much ego to let this happen without doing anything. She met Dustin and Mike in front of the school, the two boys decided to walk with her at her locker. New tags were on it : « Don't eat this pussy ». Jane's face became pale, and her body was shaking. She wasn't sure, but she thought she knew what was inside.

- "What's that smell?" Mike frowned, sniffing loudly.

Dustin began to smell loudly too. They both approached the locker and realised it was coming from inside. They turned to Jane who had a sad and worried frown. She shakingly reached her hand to her locker, unlocked it but didn't open. She took many deep breaths to calm her racing heart. With a hint of courage she began to open it. An horrible smell of rotten escaped, making wince the three teens. A dead body of a kitty was tied on the door of her locker, his member in a X with written « SLUT » on his small body. The two boys had a weird disgusted and shocked noise, like a mix between « Yuck! » and « Aaah! ».

Jane had an internal reaction. She was sure it was Abigail and Alban. The position of the cat, the word written, it was the same as in the forest but on her. She didn't know if she was angry, sad, stressed, or terrified. Probably all of this.

Mike and Dustin had covered their mouths and noses with their jackets, under the disgusted and mocking looks of the other teens. The black-haired boy turned to his friend and noticed her pale face, her wet eyes, and her shaking body.

- "Take her outside, I'll take care of that," a voice behind them said.

Dustin and Mike frowned at each other before turning. Troy was behind them, looking at the dead cat with angry eyes. The two other boys didn't discuss and obeyed. Once outside, they sat her on the steps of the stairs, Dustin wrapping his arm around her. The other of the group all arrived one by one, Max the last one, with the same

question :

- "What the hell happened!?" Max asked.
- "Some people put a dead cat inside her locker," Dustin explained.
- "We all know who did that," Lucas angrily stated.
- "Fuck, what are we supposed to do to stop them!?" Max told with the same tone.

The redhead rubbed her face like if the anger could disappear. She never wished so badly the death of two people before! She took a deep breath to calm herself.

- "The cat, it wasn't yours, right?" the redhead calmly asked.

Jane gulped and shook her head to say no, her hand tensing her tee-shirt on her chest.

- "Okay, good."
- "They...killed a cat just to scare her! You know what kind of persons killed animals for the pleasure!?" Beverly told. "Psychopaths, those persons are completely sick in their heads!"
- "We already knew that," Will added.
- "We need to tell the principal and to call the police!" Mike said.
- "No," Jane intervened with a cold tone. "It's useless."

The young girl stood, took her bag and walked in direction of the inside of the school under the dazed looks of her friends.

- "Where are you going!?" Max frowned.
- "Dying in a corner!" Jane answered with anger.

They watched her enter the school without knowing what to say.

- "We should talk to her," Bev said.

- "To tell her what!?" Max replied with an upset tone. "That everything will be okay!? I can't tell her that because I'm sure it won't! They are just getting worse and worse, pushing her to the edge, waiting for her to break down! They fucking killed a cat! They are trying to get in her head! Jane is physically and mentally strong, but if they destroy their mind, they can do what the hell they want to her! She won't fight anymore! She will let them kill her because she will think it's her fate! That she deserves it!"

Max shook her head, like if she wasn't believing what was happening to Jane. No one answered her, they all knew she was right. The bell rang, forcing them to go to their first period : History. Jane was already in class, clenching her jaw and watching outside with red puffy eyes. The party watched Alban who had a proud and pedantic smile.

- "Look at him, he is pathetic," Mike grumbled.

Max couldn't let that happen. She quickly walked to him and leaned on the desk, looking at him with dark eyes.

- "Next time, I won't tell her to not kill you, I'll even help her to do it," the redhead told with a deep voice.

- "Are you threatening me?" the blonde boy smirked.

- "No, I'm just telling what's going to happen."

Alban's smile faded. Max was kinda proud of herself, she knew he wouldn't stop, but at least he stopped bragging to be a jerk. When the redhead sat, she gave a quick look to Jane. The brunette was looking at her too, with a small smile.

The rest of the week was a bit calmer. Alban and Abigail still mocked Jane, pushed her against her locker or asked her how her chest was with a laugh. Even if it was less than the cat, it was still hard to support everyday in front of people who didn't care, who were even laughing with them, like if it was normal, like it wasn't hurting her. She almost hadn't slept of the week, fearing the worst.

- "Hey," Max softly said.

The two girls were in direction of the store, school was over for this week.

- "You're okay?"

- "Yeah, yeah, just lost in my thoughts..." Jane answered.

- "Okay. If you don't want me to come tomorrow to take some rest, it's fine, I understand."

- "No, no, you can come, I can take some rest with you," Jane weakly smiled. "And...I don't think it's a good idea for me to stay alone...you know, dark thoughts."

- "Yeah, I know what it's like."

- "My sister works all night and begins early tomorrow...if, if you wanna come tonight and spend the night at my apartment, with me, you're welcomed," the brunette shyly proposed.

- "I, I don't want to impose myself."

- "You're not, I'm asking you, but if you prefer coming only tom-"

- "No, no, I'm good, I would love to," Max softly cut.

- "Cool," Jane smiled.

- "Your sister won't mind?"

- "No, you won't even see her. She finishes at 2 or 3am and tomorrow she begins at 8am, so..."

- "Oh wow, she never sleeps!?"

- "Tomorrow night, in front of a movie we both won't see," Jane answered with an amused smile.

- "You don't see her a lot," Max stated.

- "No, but we try to spend the most time possible when we can."

The two girls arrived in front of the store. Max left her and went back

to her home to pack up some stuff and waiting Jane after her work. She was so happy that Jane asked her to spend the night with her, it was better than what she planned.

## 49. A break

The redhead was above the saucepan of mac and cheese, stirring lightly with the wooden spoon. The brunette was placing the plates and the cutleries on her table, her cat rubbing at her legs.

- "Cat, I'm going to fall," Jane told with no conviction and watching what was missing on the table.

Max turned her head with a smile while Jane was leaning against the piece of furniture of the kitchen, her arms crossed, facing the living room. The redhead changed the spoon of hand and placed the free one on her girlfriend's arm. Jane looked at her and put her hand on Max's. The two girls were relax, enjoying their moment together, with no one to interrupt them or to ruin their date. Except...

- "Ahouch! Cat!" Jane grumbled.

Max giggled while Jane was trying to put off her cat who was clutched to her leg. As a revenge, Jane decided to tousle his hair with weird gaga noises. The cat had an upset meow before walking away.

- "He hates me now," Jane smiled, getting back in her first position.

- "Definitely," Max chuckled. "It's ready, you can sit."

- "Cool, it's smelling too good, I didn't know how long I could have waited more!"

- "Well, I hope the taste will be as good as the smell!"

- "There is only one way to know that," Jane smirked.

The brunette gave a small kiss on her girlfriend's lips which made her blush a bit. Jane sat at the table while Max was filling their plates with pastas with a big smile on her face. They spent the last weeks having secret dates at each other's place, enabling themselves to be closer than usual, but Max was still very sensitive to Jane's kisses, and wanted to have this sensation all her life.

- "Eat slowly, you're gonna choke!" Max lightly said.

- "(gulps) Sorry," Jane pouted. "But it's too good! I want this to be my last meal."

- "If you continue to eat like that, it will be!" the redhead joked.

- "Then, I wanna be cremated, and I don't want a ceremony," Jane answered.

- "Oh yeah, let's talk about death while we are eating, it's so romantic!" Max chuckled.

- "You don't want something special, you?"

- "I wanna die one day before you, like that I won't have to burn your dead body."

- "Good answer," the brunette chuckled.

Max gently pushed her head with an amused sigh. After their dinner, the two girls got ready to go to bed. Jane had big dark circles and small eyes, it was time to take some rest. Max laid down on the side of the wall, Jane on her right. The redhead was on her back, stretching her arms when Jane rolled on her side and wrapped her arms around her waist.

- "If you want me to move, you just need to ask," Jane said.

- "Are you kidding!? I want you to stay like that forever!" Max answered, placing her arm on Jane's, rubbing it.

Jane took support on her left arm to give a « goodnight » kiss to Max. But both of the girls wanted more. Jane leaned again, kissing more her girlfriend.

Max slid her hand from Jane's back to her hair, caressing her cheek with her thumb, and getting her closer to her. She felt Jane's hand grabbing more firmly her waist and rolling a bit more on her which increased the heat inside her. Her heart was racing so much that she thought it was going to explode! The butterflies in her stomach were stuck in a pleasant tornado and the sensation between her legs was always asking more. Max broke the kiss by gently pushing her girlfriend and took a moment to calm her breathing and to admire

the pretty girl above her.

- "Did I hurt you?" Jane asked.

- "No, no, it's just..." Max hesitated.

- "You're not ready, it's fine, I understand," the brunette smiled.

She leaned again for a small kiss this time and slowly rolled on her back. While Jane was falling asleep, Max couldn't stop thinking of this, of all the sensations she had in her body, it was magical! But there still was this part of her, worrying about this new lifestyle, with a boy it was kinda clear how to...do this, but with a girl, she didn't know. She didn't know how to do it, she didn't know if she was good at it, if she would like it. They has been together for only three weeks, it was too soon for her. She shook her head, and tried to sleep.

When the redhead reopened her eyes, the sun was trying to pass through the curtains, but there was nobody next to her. She looked at the alarm clock on the white nightstand and saw it was half past seven. By the murmurs she was hearing from the corridor, she understood that Jane woke up to see her sister before she left for her work. The entrance's door slammed. It was now silent, with only footsteps heard. The room's door opened, and Jane appeared. She apparently didn't notice that Max was awake because she was trying to make the less noise possible, until...

- "Oh fuck!" the brunette exclaimed before completely falling on her floor making a big « BOOM ».

Max couldn't hold her laugh and rolled to see her girlfriend facing the floor.

- "Did I wake you up?" Jane asked with smile.

- "Jane, you woke up the entire town!" the redhead giggled.

The brunette accompanied her girlfriend with a small chuckle before standing again and sitting on the bed.

- "I need to tidy my room."



- "You think?" Max mocked.

Jane smiled and lied down again, leaning to give a quick kiss to Max.

- "You are a morning kisser," the redhead pouted.

- "What?" frowned Jane frowned.

- "You kiss in the morning, before brushing your teeth, there is a place reserved for people like you in Hell."

- "I'm just a lover," the brunette stated with a smile.

- "If you want," Max chuckled.

- "I'm gonna sleep a bit more if you don't mind, you can live your life if you want, my home is your home."

- "Um...I'm gonna stay here, I need to sleep more too."

- "As you want."

Max wasn't really tired, she just wanted to stay with Jane and to snuggle against her. She was still a bit shy in her movement, too scared to touch her somewhere she didn't want. She didn't try her chest, she still didn't know what the deal with it was, but she wanted to be sure that Jane was okay with that before. So, for now, she just placed her head on her shoulder and her arm around her waist, Jane holding her tight.

They didn't do anything special, just eating the rest of the day before, playing with the cat, and cuddling in the couch while talking about life and other things. When Constance came back, Max decided to go to let Jane and Constance enjoying their privileged moment. Jane accompanied her in front of her door.

- "Thank you for coming yesterday," Jane shyly said.

- "No problem, I preferred spending the night with you than with Neil and my mom," Max smiled.

- "Then, I'm glad you had a good night."

Max smiled and nodded. Jane put her hands on Max's cheeks while the redhead put hers on her girlfriend's waist. They both leaned to kiss, a bit longer than a « goodbye » kiss. When Jane broke it, Max was blushing a bit and uncontrollably smiling. The redhead gave a last kiss before leaving Jane who came back inside her apartment.

- "So?" Constance asked.

- "What?" Jane frowned with a smile.

- "How was your day?"

- "It was...a really nice day."

- "Good, I'm happy she came, your week had been long and hard, a little break couldn't hurt."

- "Yeah, it was a good idea."

The two sisters prepared their board game for the night, eating pizza.

## 50. The flyer

When Dustin opened his locker, a blue paper fell on the floor. He crouched to pick it up. It was a flyer for the Spring Dance in one month. He walked in the halls, reading the paper with a big smile when he bumped into someone.

- "Oof, sorry," the young boy apologized.
- "It's fine," Jane smiled.
- "You're coming?"
- "What is it?" the brunette frowned.
- "The Spring Dance, they put a flyer in each locker, you didn't go to yours yet?"
- "Uh...I just did..."
- "Oh...they probably forgot."
- "Probably not," Jane said but without smile this time.

Dustin pinched his lips together and felt sorry for her. Jane wanted to disappear for days now, but excluding her like that was worse. They just reminded her that she was too different to have a normal school life. But Dustin was clearly disagreeing. He gave her his paper -which she took- with a warm smile. The young girl read the paper. It was written that it was to the BOYS to invite the GIRLS. She was probably paranoid, but she felt aimed by this sentence, like to tell her she was abnormal. She didn't say anything. She just clenched her jaw and gave back the paper to Dustin.

In another hall, two redheads were reading the same paper.

- "Are you going with...?" Bev asked, saying the name with her eyes.
- "I don't know, I don't think she is ready," Max answered.
- "We will go in group, as usual I guess."

- "Yeah maybe."
  - "How was this week-end?" Beverly smirked.
  - "It was great, as usual," Max smiled with a small blush. "But..."
  - "But what?"
  - "I, I don't know...(looks around and gets closer) Friday night, while we were kissing, I thought we were going to...go further."
  - "Oh!" Bev exclaimed louder than she thought.
  - "Sssh, keep your voice down!"
  - "Okay, sorry...what happened next?"
  - "Nothing, I stopped her, and she understood that I wasn't ready but...if, if I'm never ready?"
  - "It's normal to stress, sex is always stressing."
  - "It's not the problem, it's...I, I don't know how to do this with a girl," Max confessed.
  - "You know how to do it with a boy?"
  - "Um...yes..."
  - "Oh! You never told me that you and Gary had..."
  - "We didn't do it that much, just sometimes," Max shrugged.
- Beverly stopped in front of Max, crossed her arms and had a big smile on her face.
- "What?" Max frowned.
  - "You didn't like it, right?" Bev smiled more.
  - "...It, it wasn't that bad..."
  - "At least, you can compare now."

- "No, I can't because nothing happened! You know you're not helping me, right?"

- "I know, but you're too funny," Beverly gently mocked. "And, I'm sorry, but the only person who can help you is...your girlfriend."

- "I know," Max sighed. "I don't want her to think I'm potted and awkward!"

- "She won't, relax, did she ever let you feel like that?"

- "No."

- "Exactly, so go talk to her, she will be totally aware of you...discovering...the gay world."

- "Not now, it can wait."

- "You're sure?" Bev smirked.

Max frowned, a bit worried of her friend's idea right now. Bev looked around and got a bit closer to Max.

- "You don't dream of her approaching you very close, her lips almost touching yours, blocking you against the lockers, her body against your body, and kissing you passionately while she slides her right hand under your short and grabs your boob with her left hand, caressing your nipple, feeling all the heat inside her growing inside you and—"

- "Okay! Stop!" Max cut with a red face. "Bev, you're crazy!"

- "At least, you know you want it now. I'm not that useless!"

- "Never do that again! It's so embarrassing..."

Beverly giggled and kissed her friend's cheek. Max was trying to hide her smile behind the book she was holding. Bev was right, she wasn't against this with Jane, but doing it theoretically and doing it in real were two different things, and it was an unknown world for her. Maybe she would talk to Jane about this, hoping it wouldn't make her run away.

The two girls joined Mike and Will who were both debating about the Spring Dance. Mike was wondering which girl he was going to invite. But Will, felt attacked by the same sentence as Jane. People were very narrow-minded. Will was sure that Jane and him were not the only one like that, and this sentence was hurting more persons than the authors wanted. When the two boys looked up at the girls, they both noticed Max's red cheeks and frowned.

- "Are you okay?" Mike asked.

- "Yeah, why?"

- "You're red."

- "Oh! (looks angrily at Bev) It's nothing, just...the heat of outside," Max explained.

Bev pinched her lips together to not laugh. Hopefully, Will and Mike didn't ask more. Lucas, Dustin, and Jane arrived near them, talking about the Spring Dance too.

- "You okay?" Bev frowned.

- "Um...yeah," Jane answered with a small voice.

- "You're sure?"

- "Yeah, yeah, just...tired."

The four boys all looked at each other. Everytime the two girls were having an intercation, they couldn't stop thinking they were dating. Max looked at them with a judging pout which stopped them. The three girls walked in front of the boys who were murmuring.

- "You remember when Jane kissed a girl in the changing room?" Lucas asked, keeping his voice down.

- "Yeah, why ?" Mike frowned.

- "Who did basket with her?"

- "Bev," Will stated.

- "Exactly."
- "You think it was her!?" Dustin said.
- "Who else!"
- "It makes sense!" Mike added.
- "Bev is the only one who never had a boyfriend before," Lucas continued.
- "Probably because she is lesbian!" Dustin intervened.

The four boys all nodded with a proud pout like if they had discovered the ultimate mystery of life.

They arrived in History class, Jane leaving them to go to her seat. When Alban entered the room, he threw a kiss to her with a weird laugh after it. What other plan did he have in mind?

## 51. Serious talk

Max hadn't stopped thinking of what Beverly told her the day before. It was turning again and again in her head and needed to talk about it before she stressed too much and ran away from Jane. She arrived in front of her door who opened while she was going to knock. Jane's sister appeared with a start, with a surprised face.

- "Um...Jane is in her room," the blonde girl said, letting her enter.

- "Thanks," Max frowned.

The redhead entered while Constance closed the door, probably going to work. Max froze a moment in the corridor. Talking about this after such a short time sounded crazy to her, and it would probably sound crazy to Jane too! But it was too late to step back, her sister saw her, she would tell Jane she was there, Jane would ask her why she came but didn't come to her, it would make things worse. She took a deep breath and slowly walked in front of Jane's room. She didn't know what she was doing but it was noisy and the girl didn't hear her knocking at the door. She slowly opened it and slid her head. Her girlfriend was punching her boxing bag with her headphone on her ears. She entered and leaned against the wall, waiting for her to notice her presence. Jane turned and had a big jump when she saw her, before collapsing on her bed. Max sat next to her while she laughing, and put off her headphone.

- "God! You scared the shit out of me!" Jane told, breathing heavily.

- "Yeah, I saw!" Max smiled.

- "(straightens) Did we have a date?"

- "No, no, I wanted to talk to you...about something..."

- "Oh...you want to break up..."

- "What!? No! Fucking no!"

- "Oh! Good, then, I'm listening," Jane smiled, relieved.



Jane stood and took a towel to wipe her sweating face and under her tee-shirt while Max was fidgeting a bit and looking away, feeling anxious and ridiculous.

- "Hey, what is it? Is everything okay?" Jane asked with a concerned tone.

- "Yeah, yeah! Nothing bad, don't worry, it's just...I, I don't know how to approach the subject..."

- "Okay, uh...take your time then."

Max took a deep breath before beginning :

- "You remember last Friday night? (Jane nods) Before falling asleep we kissed an—"

- "Look," Jane cut, "if I've been too far, I'm sorry, it wasn't the goal, I wasn't trying to...you know."

- "Yeah, I know, it's fine, it's not the problem," Max reassured.

- "Oh, then what is it?"

- "Um...I, I'm still a bit uncomfortable to...touch you, I mean, I don't know where I can...and...where I can't..."

Jane pouted and nodded. She crossed her arms and sat next to her girlfriend, looking at her floor.

- "You think I'm weird, I was sure of that!" Max said. "I should go!"

- "No, (puts her hand on Max's arm) it's not that, it's not weird at all, I'm happy you talk to me about your...insecurities but..."

- "But what?"

- "I, I don't know..."

- "You don't want to go further with me, that's it?"

- "(rolls her eyes) Can you stop a bit, I'm trying to tell something too!" Jane softly told, a bit upset.

- "Okay, sorry, go on," Max encouraged.

Jane opened her mouth but no words came out. She didn't know how to explain what was blocking her so she decided to show her. She began to put off her tee-shirt.

- "Um, we are not going to...right?" Max frowned, feeling her cheeks blushing.

- "No, I need to show you something," Jane seriously answered.

Jane took completely off her tee-shirt, letting appearing the big white bandage on her chest. Max thought she understood what Jane wanted to show her, she would finally see what was wrong with her chest. Jane snatched the bandage in one gesture and closed her eyes like if she didn't want to see a monster.

- "What do you see?" Jane rapidly asked, holding her breathing.

- "Um...nothing in particular," Max frowned.

- "I know, there is nothing..."

Jane grabbed Max's hand and placed it on her cheeks. Max lightly caressed with her thumb but wasn't understanding what was the matter.

- "Is it how lesbians do foreplay?" Max joked.

- "Can you, please, stop?" Jane begged.

- "Okay, I'm sorry, but I see nothing wrong with your chest! Was something on it and...disappeared?"

- "Uh...yeah...kinda..."

- "What was it? Did Abigail hurt you?"

At those words, Jane closed more her hand on Max's and had a brutal gasp.

- "Does it have something to do with what happened in the forest?"

the redhead slowly asked.

Jane hardly gulped and nodded. She reopened her eyes but preferred looking away, hiding her tears that Max could obviously see. The redhead didn't harass her with her questions, she gave her some time to calm herself and letting her the time she needed to continue by herself. For now, she could just hold tight her hand which was still on her chest.

- "They...they followed me after school...I took, the path in the forest to be alone but...they were here and..."

Jane had an irregular breathing with some tears falling. Max squeezed her hand to encourage her and to show her she was here.

- "They were...I don't remember how many they were...but one grabbed me and then....Abigail began to tell me I was a slut and I had to pay. She grabbed my neck and tightened with her nails and when she freed me, Alban punched me, and then the others, but I tried to defend myself but they were too many...they blocked me on the floor and Abigail...she cut my tee-shirt and sat on me and she...touched me and...she wrote something with her knife..."

Janr closed again her eyes, more tears falling. She tried to take deep breathings to not cry but the pain was too strong and she lost the control of her emotion.

Max, as for her, was more than furious. What the fuck was wrong with them!? How could they dare, even think about it!? She looked again at Jane who was crying and placed her girlfriend's head on her shoulder to let her cry. Jane hid her face in her neck and cried more, wrapping her arms around her.

It took ten minutes for Jane to calm down. Max was still angry, mad after Abigail and the others. They weren't even ashamed of this, they kept asking her how was her chest, knowing what was on it, just to make her feel bad and uncomfortable.

- "I'm gonna try if I can hide a body correctly now," Max lightly joked but with a serious tone.

Jane had a small chuckle followed by a sniff.

- "I'm so sorry for what happened...Did you tell anyone?"

- "Yes," Jane answered. "Constance knows. She told the police and the headmaster but nobody cared..."

- "What!? What the hell! What the fuck is wrong with people!" Max got angry. "I'm gonna kill more than one person!"

- "Don't do anything, I don't want you to have problems."

- "I won't have problems, but they will have me as a problem now!"

- "Please, don't do anything, it won't change anything."

- "I can't promise you that!"

Jane looked up with her red puffy eyes and knew that Max was more than serious. She just nodded, knowing she was too stubborn to change her mind. Max tried to smile to her, but the anger was too high, and she couldn't stop thinking of Abigail and Alban and what she wanted to do to them. Apparently Jane noticed her bad mood because the girl gave a quick kiss on her cheek.

- "Don't kill them, you would be useless in jail," Jane said.

- "I won't, but it doesn't mean I can't have revenge," Max answered.

- "Don't, they will attack you after!"

- "I don't care! It will give you a break at least!"

- "Insisting is useless?"

- "Yes."

- "Okay, do what you want!" Jane told a bit upset.

The brunette sighed and put again her tee-shirt. She was feeling better, she was sure there was nothing on her chest anymore, she was still feeling it, but it was still a step.

- "And to answer your worries, you can touch me, where you want," Jane smiled.

- "I will never dare."

- "You wanna bet?" Jane said with a raised eyebrow.

Max wide opened her eyes and felt her cheeks burning. She didn't know what Jane had in mind and wondered what that smile was meaning.

- "I won't force you to touch me, you tell me stop when you feel...uncomfortable, okay?" Jane told.

Max nodded, still not knowing where she was going. Jane gently grabbed her hand and placed it on her knee.

- "Is here okay?" Jane softly asked.

- "Um...yeah," Max frowned.

The redhead began to understand better what Jane was doing. She was happy no one else was here, it was kinda weird but like that, Max was a bit more comfortable with Jane and was less worried to touch her. Obviously, she didn't touch the more private parts but it was still more than usual. Jane did the same on Max's body. She placed her hand on some parts and asked her if it was okay. Max thought it was really nice the way she did it, it was soft and reassuring.

When she left the apartment, she was feeling better about the physical problem. But she was angry for what Abigail and her lapdogs did to Jane, she couldn't let that happen without doing anything, even if Jane disagreed.

## 52. Soaked

When Max arrived at school, she went directly to Jane's locker. She kept in mind the story in the forest and needed to see Jane before doing something stupid to Abigail and Alban. The brunette approached her locker, not really surprised to see her girlfriend.

- "You're still mad?" Jane asked, already knowing the answer.
- "Of course, they are...I don't have words because even « assholes » is not enough for them!"
- "I can't disagree with that! (sighs) What are you gonna do?"
- "About what?"
- "About them."
- "Nothing."
- "What!?" Jane frowned.
- "You tell me to not do anything, I took a moment yesterday to think about it so I concluded that I won't do anything, but if they approach you, believe me, they are dead."
- "Oh yeah, I believe you!" Jane chuckled. "Is it really me who changed your mind?"
- "No, I changed it myself, but I took your opinion in consideration," Max smiled.
- "Oh, I'm honored!"
- "You should be! I don't really listen to people usually."
- "It's because I'm special," Jane joked.
- "Yeah, you're very special," Max said insinuating she was weird.
- "Shut up!" the brunette chuckled, gently pushing her.

Max laughed too and watched Jane with heart eyes. Jane was hesitating to open her locker in front of Max, she didn't want her to see the eventual papers or another dead cat inside, it would just confirm that she was weak.

- "What's your code?" Max asked.

- "Um...1157, why?" Jane frowned.

The redhead nodded and pushed Jane. She opened the padlock and the locker for her.

- "Nothing," the redhead said.

- "I, I could have done that myself..." Jane told a bit ashamed.

- "I know, but you don't have to."

Jane smiled. Even if she didn't like to feel like a fragile and weak person, she liked that Max wanted to protect her and take care of her, so why not let her do it, it couldn't hurt her.

- "My sister doesn't come back home the next Friday night, if you want to do something, like...working," Jane proposed with a joking smile at the end.

- "One day you will ask me to work with you and I won't understand," Max chuckled. "You could come to my home, Neil is in a work trip next week and my mom spends the night with some friends, she will come back late, you won't see her."

- "Okay, sounds good, but I'll have to pass by my apartment before, to feed Cat."

- "No problem."

Jane closed her locker and was ready to follow her girlfriend when the reality came violently back to her.

- "Hey Slut Jane! How is your chest!?" Abigail mocked, keeping walking while her friends were laughing behind her.

Max saw red. Abigail was so pathetic and proud to be pathetic, it was the worse.

- "Hey Abigail!" the redhead called, angry.

The blonde teen stopped her walking and approached the redhead very close to show her she was taller than her.

- "What do you want Freckles!?" Abigail sharply scoffed.

- "Why do you always ask how is her chest!? You are missing it!?" Max replied, trying to not let her impress her.

- "What do you mean!?"

- "You know what I mean, you need all your shitsdogs to help you because you know you have no chance against her, she is way better than all of you, she doesn't need to humiliate someone to exist and she doesn't touch other people's body because she is sexually frustrated!"

Abigail didn't answer. She clenched her jaw and turned to watch Jane. The brunette didn't look down, Max was showing a strenght that she wanted to have too.

- "Aw Jane, you talked about our private moment?" Abigail mocked.

She moved her hand to caress her cheek, but Max brutally grabbed her arm to not let her do it.

- "You should be careful Freckles, you're crossing the line," the blonde girl threatened.

- "Cutting someone is not crossing the line!?"

Abigail was going to grab Max to block her more against the lockers but the arriving of the headmaster in the halls stopped her in her way.

- "It's not over," the blonde head said, gritting her teeth.

- "Definitely not," Max sharply answered.



The two girls stared angrily a moment while Abigail was walking away. Once out of sight, Max turned to her girlfriend who had an undescriptible emotion.

- "Are you okay?" Max asked, still angry.
- "Yeah...Thank you," Jane smiled.
- "When you want, Cougar."
- "How long are you going to call me like that?"
- "Until I become older."
- "What!? That's impossible!" Jane stated.
- "Then be prepared to hear that very often," Max smiled.

Jane playfully shook her head with a sigh while Max was giggling. The two girls went in class, relieved by this confrontation.

At the lunch time, they all met at the cafeteria, at their usual table, except Max who was late.

- "So, next week it's Max's birthday, with Lucas, we thought we could make a surprise and spend the day with her, as it's a Saturday, what do you think?" Mike explained.
- "It's a great idea," Bev smiled. "Jane, you come?"
- "Um...I work on Saturday and I've already asked for a free day last week..."
- "Come on Jane, it's for Max!" Beverly insisted.
- "I know! I'm gonna see with Joyce, I think I can, at least, begin later."
- "Cool!"

The four boys had an accomplice look. Bev didn't need lots of arguments to convince Jane to come, probably love arguments. They stopped talking when Max appeared and sat next to them.

- "What's up Max?" Dustin asked.

- "I'm the new target of Abigail!" the redhead answered with an upset tone.

- "What!? What happened!?" Will intervened, as surprised as the others.

Max raised her backpack which was soaked, some drops flowing on the floor.

- "She threw it in the toilets," Max explained.

- "And you did nothing?" Lucas frowned.

- "Don't insult me."

At the same moment, Abigail entered furiously the cafeteria, looking everywhere. Her face, hair, and top body were flowing on the floor. The table exploded in laugh, while Jane was looking at her with wide opened eyes and mouth, proud and happy. When the blonde girl saw her assaulter, she quickly walked to her while the rest of the cafeteria was laughing.

- "Oh hey Abigail," Max said with a fake tone. "You have some water drops a bit everywhere, be careful, you could slip and fall, it would be too bad!"

- "Don't mock me Mayfield!"

- "I'm not! I would be soooo sad if something happens to you!"

- "You—I—AAAR!"

Abigail's face became red of anger and frustration, not knowing what to answer to Max. She hit the floor with her foot and left the cafeteria under the amused teenagers.

- "What have you done to her!?" Dustin asked with a smile.

- "Nothing, it wasn't me," the redhead smirked.

The others didn't ask more, still excited by this. They knew she wasn't the kind to brag her super cool actions. Jane kept eating, looking at her tray with a big smile that Max noticed.

## 53. The locker room

The next day, this time, Max wasn't waiting for her at her locker. They spent the evening together and Max was way comfier with her than before. She opened her locker with confidence but it didn't last. A paper fell again of it. She quickly picked it up and read it. It was Bev, asking her to meet her in the locker room. She frowned, not understanding why she was so secretive and wanted to be isolated. It was weird, but she didn't search further, Beverly would explain her anyway. She arrived early at school, so she had lots of time before her first period. She took her way to the locker room. When she entered, there was no one inside. Maybe she put the paper the day before and was still not at school yet. She sat on a bench, waiting. After five minutes, she heard the door opening and closing, but it wasn't Bev. Her face faded and paled, her body was getting numb, and her heart was racing. Abigail, Alban, Derek, Rick, and two girls she didn't know were standing in front of her with a satisfied smile.

- "Hey Dyke," Abigail said.

- "Did you miss us?" Alban rhetorically asked.

Jane loudly gulped. She wanted to run away, but it was like if her body wasn't answering and couldn't move anymore. But her assailants were able to move. They slowly approached her, surrounding her while she was feeling the tears coming. Derek and another girl grabbed her by her arms and forced her to stand, to face Abigail.

- "What are you gonna do!?" Jane angrily asked, gritting her teeth.

Abigail answered with a loud slap on her cheek.

- "Shut up Dyke, you have no power here."

- "Why don't you leave me alone!?" Jane said with a weak and shaking voice and more tears in her eyes.

- "Aw, are you gonna cry?" Abigail mocked which made laugh the others around. "You're pathetic."

Abigail got closer to Jane, grabbing her jeans, her face at a few centimeters of Jane's. She made lots of movements with her mouth before spitting a huge, yellow, stinking, and slimy liquid on her face. Jane felt her body shaking more, not supporting the sensation of her slobber flowing on her eye, nose, and cheek. She tried to wipe it by moving her head to her shoulder, but someone grabbed her hair, forcing her to look up at Abigail.

- "What, Dyke? Is there something bothering you?" the blonde girl smirked. "But I'm a girl, you're liking it, right?"

Abigail put her hands on Jane's waist and slid them slowly to her butt which she firmly grabbed. Jane had a movement of surprise and had a silent gasp. She was trying to not open her mouth, not wanting the spit on her face to get inside. She didn't want to show them her fear, but she was terrified! She knew what people like Abigail or Alban were capable of. The blonde boy was the next one to face Jane. He punched her again and again in her stomach without stopping. Jane's body wanted to bend, but someone was still holding her by her hair, hurting her too. The pain in her stomach began to become so unbearable that she thought all her ribs were broken. When he finally stopped, they forced her to kneel while she was trying to get her breathing back.

- "You're gonna like it, don't worry," Alban said with a smile.

Abigail crouched behind her, wrapping her arm around her neck and tightening to block her, while she was caressing her body with her other hand. Alban stood in front of Jane and began to unbutton his jeans. He put his hand in his underwear and grabbed his dick to take it off. Jane was looking at him with begging eyes, hoping there was a bit of a human inside, but it didn't work. Someone closed her nose to force her to open her mouth. She tried to stay the most possible time her mouth closed, but she was running out of air and had to open her mouth. Alban laughed and put his dick inside her mouth. He began to do back and forth with some satisfied moans, while Abigail was still caressing Jane. The brunette couldn't breath correctly, her nose blocked and the dick in her mouth, getting harder and going down in her throat, hurting it. She was feeling the tears falling on her cheeks, blurring her vision. Her body was dizzy, she stopped struggling, accepting her fate.

But, a light made her believe there was still a chance. She closed her mouth strongly, biting the dick with all the strenght she had.

- "AAAAAAH!" Alban screamed. "GET HER OUT OF ME ! GET HER OUT OF ME!"

The others, not understanding, tried to pull out Jane, but the girl was determined to bite more.

- "STOP THIS! STOP THIS!" the blonde boy yelled with a higher voice than usual.

The teens began to punch her at her face, trying to make her open her mouth, but Jane was stronger now, she was too satisfied to make him suffer, that was what he deserved!

Jane felt a hot liquid flowing in her throat while Alban was paling. They finally got detached. Alban fell on the floor, losing blood while Jane, covered of blood, turned to Abigail and spat on her what was inside her mouth. The blonde teen was now covered of blood with...

- "AAAAAAAAA!" Abigail screamed in panic.

Alban's dick was laying on the floor.

Physically and emotionally exhausted, Jane fell on the floor, half dazed, and began to cry. Someone entered the room and yelled in the corridor to call 911. Many persons entered and one of them took Jane in their arms. But the girl was struggling, trying to escape.

- "It's over, Jane! It's over!" Troy said. "You're okay, I got you, it's over."

Jane looked at him and recognised her friend. She let her tears fall while he was hugging her and trying to comfort her.

## 54. The incident

- "Attention to everyone. An incident had been reported. Consequently, the locker room area and the halls around are closed to let the police and the medical staff doing their jobs. By respect for them and the victims, I will ask you to not bother them and to cooperate if they want to ask you questions. Thank you."

The entire school heard this message from their headmaster. Max and Will, in the same class, looked at each other with a frown, not understanding. No one seemed to understand, but apparently something bad happened in the school. The teacher tried to continue his class, but the woman seemed as shaken up and preoccupied as them.

- "He won't tell us what happened!?" Max asked in a murmur.

- "Apparently not. He probably doesn't want to create a riot," Will whispered.

- "He did the best thing to create a riot, everyone will try to know what happened!"

Will pouted and shrugged, not knowing more than her.

- "By order of the chief of the police, classes are suspended and all the teachers are asked to come in my office. Thank you."

All the teens quickly put their school stuff in their bags and went in the corridor, looking for their friends.

- "Do you know what happened!?" Lucas asked.

- "Of course not!" Mike answered.

- "Do you think someone died?" Dustin said.

- "I hope it's Abigail!" Beverly intervened.

- "A bit extrem, but I saw no problem to see her a bit hurt," Will added.

- "No one has seen Jane!?" Max frowned.

The party all looked around, but there were too many people in the halls now and could barely see far. Max began to worry, something happened, and Jane wasn't here, it was more than a coincidence. Her friends shared her fear and began to search more.

- "We could try to sneak to it, to see if she is involved or not," Bev calmly proposed to not worry Max more.

The redhead nodded and followed their friends. They tried to go through the crowd who was amassed in the same hall, all stuck here. They finally reached the angle where a yellow band was installed with two cops in front of, trying to avoid the other teens to see.

- "Who are the victims!?" Lucas asked with no form of courtesy.

- "We can't tell you," the policeman answered with a serious tone.

- "Is Jane one of them!?"

- "We can't tell you!"

- "Don't talk to us like that, you piece of shit!" Mike got angry. "Jane is our friend and we need to know how she is! If you're too cunt to rea—"

- "Troy is there!" Will cut.

- "TROY!" all the teens called.

The black-haired boy heard them and looked at them. His tee-shirt and hands were covered of blood and his face was more than pale with wide opened eyes. He finished his conversation with the cop and slowly approached them.

- "Uuuh...hey," Troy said with a shaking voice.

- "Is it Jane!?" Dustin asked.

- "Don't answer boy, they are just curious," the policeman told.



- "Yes, it's her," the black-haired boy answered, ignoring the man.

- "Oh god! How is she!?" Max asked.

- "Alive..."

The policeman sighed loudly with his nose and raised the band to let them in. He didn't want everybody around to know about this.

- "Is it her blood!?" Will said with wide opened eyes.

- "I, I don't know..."

- "What happened!?" Mike continued.

- "I don't know...I, I heard...screams coming from the locker room. When I entered, she was on the floor with blood on her face and Alban—"

- "This piece of shit!" Dustin exclaimed.

The party all looked at him with angry eyes, Lucas even tapped him.

- "Sorry..." Dustin pouted.

- "Um..." Troy continued. "So, Alban, he was on the floor too, bleeding from (places his hand at the level of his penis) and he was completely white...Abigail had blood on her face too and she was screaming and the others, they just stopped moving!"

They could clearly tell that Troy was still under shock. He was avoiding everyone's eyes and couldn't stop fidgeting and shaking. The party didn't know what to say. They were not very close to Troy, especially because he bullied them, but the Troy they had in front of them was not the big bully who liked to humiliate them, it was a worried Troy, almost crying for his friend who was their friend too.

- "Do you know where we can see her?" Will asked.

- "They took them to hospital, but no one is allowed to see them," the Football player sniffed.

A policeman called again to take his clothes. Other cops interrogated the party about the relation between Jane and the group of bullies and the teens hadn't been tightfisted with their terms. They didn't hesitate to defend Jane and to tell how awful Abigail and Alban were with her.

After two hours, the students were finally allowed to leave the school. The group of friends went directly to the hospital, trying to see Jane. When they entered, they heard someone yelling. They turned and saw Constance having a particular conversation with the chief Hopper :

- "YOU WONDERED WHY SHE CUT HIS DICK AND NOT WHY SHE HAD TO!? ARE YOU FUCKING SERIOUS!?"

- "We need all the information to do our investigation correctly," Hopper answered.

- "Then read again my complain about them! It's not the first time they have assaulted her!" the blonde teen angrily replied. "I've already told you about them, but you did nothing and look where she is now!"

- "I'm going to ask you to calm down."

- "Calm down!? CALM DOWN!?"

- "Okay, I'll come back later."

The chief left the hospital while Constance was just standing now. She noticed the teens and went to them.

- "Do you know how she is?" Max asked.

- "She has a wrist trodden and many hematomas on her belly," Constance answered, still angry.

- "Did she really cut his dick!?" Beverly frowned.

- "Yeah, with her teeth."

The group wide opened their eyes. They didn't know if they were

disgusted or impressed. They especially wondered why she cut it with her teeth. There only was one explanation to that...

- "Did...did he...?" Will weakly asked.

- "Kinda."

They didn't know what kinda really meant, but they didn't need to know more. They sat on chairs, all waiting to be allowed to see her.

One hour later, a doctor went to them and allowed only one person to see her. Obviously, they let Constance go, Jane would probably want to see only her. The blonde teen quickly walked behind the doctor until the room. When she opened the door, her little sister was laying down in the bed, her eyes closed.

- "Why is she handcuffed!?" Constance angrily asked.

- "The chief wanted to be sure she wouldn't run away," the doctor answered.

- "That's fucking bullshit! (sighs) Thank you."

The doctor nodded and closed the door behind the teen. Constance slowly approached the bed, watching her sister.

- "You never stop grumbling," Jane mumbled.

- "I have all the reasons to grumble."

Jane opened her eyes with difficulties.

- "How are you?" Constance softly asked.

- "Tired..."

- "Yeah...(leans to her) It's probably a bit inappropriate, but you fucking cut a dick with your teeth, it's amazing!"

Jane surprisedly giggled at her sister's remark. She was sure Constance would like it. She didn't know why she was laughing because inside she was feeling ashamed and awful! It was probably the nerves. The

pain at her stomach made her stop.

- "Is he...?"

- "Dead? No, they are operating him but the doctors are optimistic," the blonde head reassured, placing her hand on her forehead and rubbing it with her thumb.

- "Good..."

- "The police is going to ask you questions, please, be honest and tell them everything."

- "Why would I lie?" Jane frowned.

- "I know you, and I know how you feel. You will probably forget to give some details because you will feel weak and ashamed, but, don't do this, try, try to end this rapidly."

- "Okay...I'll try..."

- "Thank you. You know I'm proud of you, right?"

- "Yeah, I know," Jane weakly smiled.

- "You should sleep a bit," Constance softly said.

- "Yeah...Can you stay?"

- "Of course, they will have to kick me out," the blonde teen joked.

Jane had a small amused sigh before closing her eyes and falling asleep, holding her sister's hand.

## 55. Massage

Jane was allowed to leave the hospital at the end of the day. She explained the cops what happened, she saw a psychiatrist, and the doctors gave her some painkillers. When she arrived in front of the building, followed by her sister, her friends were waiting for her, half asleep on the bench.

- "I wait you in the car," Constance said.

Jane, a bandage on the nose, a shiner at her left eye, a cut on her lip, and a split on her left wrist, nodded and approached them. They all started and stood when they saw her. They didn't know what to say or to do, they were just relieved to see her. Mike opened his arms and hugged her. She stifled a noise of pain and hugged him back. The others had a small chuckle and came to agglutinate around them, participating to the hug. When they finished, Jane thanked them, walked away, and joined her sister in their car.

Alban survived to the surgery. His dick was sewed to his body but he would have erection problems all his life. A trial had been avoided by his parents paying the mayor and the judges, thinking he was punished enough. Alban was definitely expelled of the school. His parents tried to complain a file against Jane, but Constance and the chief made them understand it was completely stupid and ridiculous knowing the circumstances.

The party had been victimed of the curiosity of the entire school, everyone asking them what happened. But even them didn't know what happened, and wondered if they would one day. After school, Max decided to see her. She was so terrified the day before that she needed to see her, she didn't stop thinking of her today, wondering how she was. It was her sister who opened to her. She invited her to come inside. Constance took her coat and went outside to let the two girls alone. Jane stood from the kitchen table and walked to her girlfriend.

- "How are you?" Max asked.

- "I don't know," Jane shrugged. "I'm fucking angry right now, Alban

managed to avoid jail, and Abigail and the others can go back to school."

The redhead just nodded. She was feeling the tears coming, and she knew if she talked, she couldn't hold them anymore. She took a deep breathing, trying to calm down.

- "That's all?" the redhead continued with her tightened throat.

- "No."

- "You won't tell me how you are?"

- "Not now, I, I don't want to..."

Max nodded. She slowly approached Jane and wrapped her arms around her and tightened, placing her head on her shoulder. When Jane wrapped her arms around, Max broke down. She let the tears fall, hiding her face in Jane's neck and tensing her hands on her girlfriend's tee-shirt.

- "I thought you were dead," Max cried.

Jane had a sad face but felt a pleasant heat inside her. She was happy that Max was caring this much about her, even if she didn't want her to cry. The two girls tightened more the hug while Max was still sobbing. The redhead was feeling a bit better, having Jane in her arms and feeling her heat reassured her. It was Jane who broke the hug.

- "Don't look at me, (places her hand on Jane's face) I look like a fucking panda," Max lightly chuckled, wiping her face.

- "I love pandas," Jane smiled.

- "Don't try to charm me," the redhead joked. "I don't even know why I cried, I mean, I thought you were dead for like a few seconds because Troy told us you were alive, but he was covered of blood and I thought it was yours and then we learnt more things of what happened and I couldn't stop imagining you being...terrified!"

- "I was..."

- "What?"

- "I was terrified, I thought, I really thought it was the end, if I, if I hadn't...bit him...I don't know what would have happened..." Jane said with a small voice, looking down. "I really feel stupid..."

- "Why?" Max softly asked.

- "Because...I, I should have known it was a trap..."

- "Jane, you couldn't have known!"

- "Yes I could have!" Jane firmly told, now looking at Max. "They put a paper in my locker, they made me believe that Bev wanted to see me in the locker room, and I didn't think enough! I just went, but I should have known that Bev would never asked me this!"

- "Bev is weird, she is capable of everything," Max joked with a serious tone.

Jane, surprised by her girlfriend's remark, had a confused face and giggled. Max, relieved, accompanied her.

- "You're stupid," Jane stated, amused. "I didn't wanna laugh!"

- "I know, you're completely mad at yourself, and I'm sure you already know what I think about it."

- "Oh yeah?" Jane said a bit upset now.

- "Yeah, you think this is your fault, that, you could have avoided it, or defended yourself more but, they were more than you, they planned it, they made you believe it was Bev because they know you're close to each other, and they played with your feelings. They are assholes and you're not!"

Jane sighed with her nose and looked angrily away.

- "You know I'm right and you don't want to admit it," Max lightly smiled.

- "Yeah, yeah, you're right."

- "Oof, it was so hard for you to admit it!" the redhead chuckled.
- "No, it's not that, I'm tired, that's all," Jane shrugged. "And my entire body hurt."
- "Oh...you want a massage?"
- "A massage?" the brunette frowned.
- "Yeah, a massage. It's when a person kneads another person to relax them," Max explained with a mocking tone.
- "I know what a massage is," Jane chuckled lightly. "I'm just surprised you offer me a massage."
- "Why? I'm actually very good at massage," the redhead smirked. "Where are you hurt?"
- "Um...My jaw..."
- "Not really surprising."

Max placed her hands on Jane's cheeks and began to rub her jaw. Jane didn't know why she wasn't thinking she was crazy, she cut a dick with her teeth! She thought something was wrong with her, but when she was beginning to think of it, she was feeling again the dick in her throat, choking her and hurting her. It really seemed to be the only solution, she always promised herself to do everything possible to not let something like that happen, even if it couldn't always be avoided.

- "Jane? Are you still there?"
- "Yeah, yeah," the girl sighed .
- "What's wrong?" Max frowned.
- "Nothing, I'm just...lost."
- "Do you talk about this with someone? Your sister or...a professional?"



- "I saw one yesterday, but it was just to see if I was sane enough to leave the hospital."

- "Did it help?"

- "It lasted thirty minutes, you can't do anything in thirty minutes, he just wanted to be sure I wasn't going to kill someone or myself."

- "Very encouraging!" the redhead sarcastically said, still massaging her. "At least it means you're not dangerous, it's kinda reassuring."

- "I guess," Jane shrugged.

- "How do you feel? About your aggression?"

- "Oh wow! You're so direct!"

- "You seemed more relax, I wanted to try. I don't want you to think you're alone and to close up on yourself. It's hard, what you're living is hard, but we are all here to help you, when you want, never forget that."

- "Okay."

- "I don't ask you to do it now, but when you're ready. When you talked to me about your chest and how you felt, you didn't feel better after that?"

- "Um...yes, I mean, I cried a lot..."

- "Of course, you freed your emotions, and it's fine, I'm here for that too, not just the massages," the redhead joked.

- "Which are really good," Jane stated.

- "I have magic hands!" Max chuckled. "You don't want me to massage somewhere else."

- "Massage where you want, I love it too much, I'm all yours!"

Max smiled and leaned for a kiss. She felt that Jane was a bit uncomfortable with this, probably because of Alban, and knew she

would need more time to be confident again. She sat Jane on a chair and began to massage her shoulders and neck. She didn't know how she was doing this, but Jane's skin was always hot, it was really pleasant to touch. She was glad that Jane didn't reject her this time. Even if she didn't share all her emotions, she let her take care of her, to show her she was trusting her. It was a big step in their relation.

## 56. The new nickname

Jane was walking in the halls, reaching her locker under the murmurs of everyone around. She was sure they thought she was crazy, but maybe they would stop bothering her. She opened her locker without fearing a paper or whatever, she knew it was all Alban and Abigail's ideas, and the two assholes were not here today. Will approached her with a big smile in his face.

- "Hey Jane," the young boy greeted.

- "Hey" the girl answered, taking her books.

- "I, I wanted to thank you. You always come back after, I mean, they tried to take you down, but you always showed everyone that you are stronger than this and you won't let anyone take you away this part of you. It's really encouraging for people like us."

Jane frowned and turned her head to her friend. Will was looking at her with a smirk and eyes meaning everything. She understood the hidden message in his thanks and appreciated that he felt safe enough with her to tell her. She answered with a nod and a small smile. Mike arrived in running, wrapped his arm around Jane's neck and began to ruffle her hair.

- "What the fuck Mike! Stop that!" the girl grumbled, pushing him.

Mike stepped back with a laugh while Jane was killing him with her eyes.

- "I missed you," the black-haired boy told.

- "I just missed two days of school!"

- "It was long! And plus, I heard you had a new nickname!"

- "What is it, Crazy Jane?" Jane rhetorically asked.

- "No, the Pruner!"

Jane wide opened her eyes, surprised by this nickname. She was

especially surprised to find it kinda funny.

- "This is so badass!" Will stated. "I'm jealous now!"

- "Me too!" Mike added. "The Pruner, put your dick in her mouth and she will keep it!"

Mike presented it like if it was a slogan for a presidential. Will didn't dare to laugh, and Jane was still not very comfy with this story. She placed her hand on her throat and looked at the floor with a frown.

- "I'm sorry, I didn't want to embarrass you..." Mike apologized.

- "It's fine...it's just a bit too soon, that's all," Jane reassured with a weak smile.

- "I won't do that again, I'm sorry..."

- "It's fine, let's talk about something else."

Her wish was going to be granted. Lucas and Gabrielle approached the group of three, both hugging Jane to greet her.

- "How many time are you going to keep that?" Gabrielle asked, showing Jane's left arm.

- "One week," Jane answered. "It could have been worse."

- "Yeah...I'm glad you made it."

- "I'm glad too!"

- "How are you?" Lucas asked with a concerned tone.

- "I'm...better than I thought," Jane said, biting her bottom lip on her left. "I gotta go, I don't wanna be late."

Jane grabbed her bag and walked away.

- "She is not okay, right?" Lucas stated.

- "No," the three others answered at the same time.

- "What can we do?" Mike said.

- "Nothing, except supporting her, it's not up to us to play the psychologists, I'm sure her sister won't let her like that without doing anything," Gabrielle answered. "We should just try to avoid the subject, even if she is denying it, it's still a rape."

The word gave a bad shiver in the three boys' backs. Mike was feeling more guilty for laughing of it. He was so stupid sometimes!

- "But if she talks about it with one of you, listen to her, it's harder for her than for us," the black-haired girl finished.

The boys nodded. Gabrielle wanted to study psychology and already read some books about it, so the boys were trusting more her advice than anyone else's.

Jane met Beverly and Max on her way to class.

- "Hey Jane," Beverly smiled.

- "Hey," Jane sighed.

- "You okay?"

- "Yeah, I was just going to class."

- "Really? It's in the other way you know?"

- "Yeah...I just want to...take this way, instead."

She didn't let the time to Beverly and Max to answer and quickly walked away again. Bev and Max frowned to each other.

- "What's wrong?" Bev asked.

- "I don't know..." Max answered.

Jane opened the door to the stairs. She knew no one was taking those stairs because it was always cold and there were other stairs more direct in the school. She was breathing heavily and needed to hide. She leaned against the wall and let her body sliding on the floor. She

grabbed her head and began to cry uncontrollably.

- "Jane?"

The girl brutally started and looked up. She had to wipe her red puffy eyes to distinguish her interlocutor. It was Dustin, looking at her with concerned eyes.

- "What's wrong?" the boy asked, crouching in front of her.

Jane was still breathing heavily, not able to say a word. Her entire body was shaking and the tears were still falling, looking away.

- "Hey, look at me Jane," Dustin said, placing his hand on her cheek and forcing her to look at him. "Breathe with me, slowly."

The young boy and the girl took a moment to coordinate their breathings. Jane managed to calm herself but was still crying.

- "I, I can't go to class..." Jane told with a high voice due to her tight throat.

- "Why?" Dustin frowned.

- "Because...it's...too close..."

- "Too close? Too close of what?"

- "Of...the locker room..." Jane said with a gasp.

- "Oh...You know they are not here, right?"

- "Of course I know! But I can't!" Jane got angry with more tears in her eyes. "I can't anymore..."

Dustin felt his heart breaking. He always saw Jane as a rock ready to fight, but the girl seemed to give up now. Alban and Abigail managed to break her.

- "I, I'll go with you," the boy said.

- "No, no, I don't want to go," Jane cried.

- "No one is going to hurt you, I promise, none of them are here today. You trust me?"

Jane took a deep breath and slowly nodded. Dustin grabbed both of her hands and helped her to stand. He felt her body shaking and decided to take her in his arms. She shook more and began to sob silently on his shoulder. Dustin tightened more, wanting her to feel safe. He didn't know what to think about it, he didn't want her to give up because it would mean that the bullies won.

After a moment, Jane stopped crying and broke the hug. Dustin smiled to her to cheer her up, but it didn't work. He wiped her face with his thumbs and grabbed her hand to squeeze it. The two friends went in the halls, in direction of Jane's class. When they arrived near the locker room, Jane tightened more her hand on Dustin's and stopped walking, feeling the panic coming back.

- "Hey, hey, it's okay Jane, it's okay, you're not alone, I'm here, I'm with you," the boy quickly said. "Breathe slowly, okay?"

Jane gulped and nodded. She kept walking with slow steps, fearing the room. Once in front of it, Jane froze. She could hear their voices and feeling their hands on her and his...inside her throat, the blood flowing, the tears falling, their screams, and the bodies laying down...They got her.

## 57. A mom's hug

Max was in direction of the store. Jane had been very distant the day before, and she wanted to talk to her privately, to know how she was. When she arrived, she was at the counter, staring into space.

- "Hey Jane," Max said.

Jane started. She was so deep in her thoughts that she hadn't heard her entering.

- "Oh, um...hi," Jane answered.

- "How are you?"

- "I'm fine, I'm fine."

- "No, you're not. Dustin told me for yesterday."

- "Oh..."

- "Yeah, oh. Do you see someone?" Max asked.

- "I saw a psychologist this morning," Jane sighed.

- "And? How was it?"

- "Hard. I'm kinda used to it, I want to be fine rapidly."

- "You don't have to, I understand that you want to be okay, but sometimes, some wounds need more time to heal."

- "I know, I know...I'm tired..."

- "I see," Max pouted.

The redhead looked closely at her girlfriend. She had dark circle and really tired eyes, she didn't know how she was still standing on her feet!

- "Why didn't you tell me ?" Max continued.



- "Told you what ?" Jane asked with a small voice.
- "About your panic attack."
- "I...I don't know...I, I didn't want you to think that I have a problem, that I'm a burden..."
- "Oh, Jane," the redhead sighed. "When are you gonna understand that I'm with you no matter what, you shouldn't worry of what I think of you, I will never think something like that! I'm not dating you to abandon you when you need me the most! You can trust me."

Jane nodded.

- "I'm sorry..."
- "Hey," sMax said, grabbing her hand. "I'm not here to yell at you and to reproach you something, okay? I just wanted to know how you were."

Jane looked down. Max could tell that there was something wrong, she was avoiding eyes' contact and she was always touching her neck, like when she had the cut on her chest. A noise made start Jane who quickly removed her hand from Max's. A customer just entered the store. Joyce welcomed her and noticed the two girls a bit embarrassed.

- "Jane," Joyce told, walking to them. "You should check the back shop, Max, you can help her if you want."

The two young girls frowned at her, not understanding.

- "Let's go girls!" Joyce insisted.

They both started and went to the back shop. It was a small closet with lots of carton boxes inside.

- "Why are we here?" Jane asked.
- "I think she wanted to give us some...privacy," Max answered.
- "Oh."

- "What's wrong with your neck?"

- "What!?" Jane told with wide opened eyes and putting her hand on it.

- "You always touch it, I presumed there is something wrong and...last time we kissed, you weren't really into it."

- "I, I...it's irritated..."

- "Your neck?" Max frowned.

- "My throat...I, I still feel it...I...don't know what to do to not feel it again..."

Max found nothing to say. She didn't know what to do with psychologic problems, she never wanted to understand her step-brother's problems, but now it was her girlfriend, and she was feeling completely useless, she wanted to help her, she just didn't know how.

- "I, I can't handle it anymore Max, I'm too scared..."

- "Why?" the redhead softly asked.

- "I, I don't know! I don't know how many Alban and Abigail are in the world, waiting to find me! Just because Alban is out for now doesn't he won't come back! What I did to him is awful!"

- "What he did to you is worse," Max sharply stated, feeling the anger coming back.

- "I cut his dick! Why can't anyone understand that!?" Jane got angry. "THIS IS FUCKING INSANE!"

- "So what!? You would have preferred him to finish!?"

- "NO!"

- "Then what's the problem!?"

- "I DON'T KNOW! I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S THE PROBLEM! (punches a box) I AM THE PROBLEM!" Jane yelled, her face red of anger.

Jane stopped moving, looking down and breathing heavily of anger. She sat on the floor, her back against the shelves, facing the redhead. Max, who stayed calm but was angry too, leaned against the door, her arms crossed.

- "Why do you think you're the problem?" Max asked.

- "I, I don't know...it came out, like that...something is wrong with me!"

- "Being scared is not something wrong! What's wrong is Alban, Abigail, and the others harassing, assaulting, and raping you, and not having problems with that! You are the victim, but no one treated you like that, the headmaster did nothing, the cops didn't care, and now you think they are right and that it's all your fault but it's not! The persons who are supposed to help and protect you let you down and THIS is the real problem," Max angrily stated.

- "You...you think it...it was a rape?" Jane asked with a shaking voice and tears in her eyes.

- "He penetrated your mouth with no consent, how do you call that?"

Jane had the face of someone who understood and realised what happened to her.

- "Oh shit..." the girl sighed.

The brunette began to nibble her thumb, trying to hold her tears.

- "I'm sorry..." Max said feeling bad for telling her too directly.

The redhead straightened on her feet again. She was so shaken up by all of this that she thought her legs were going to shirk under her weight. She weakly walked to Jane and sat next to her.

- "I'm so sorry Jane..."

The brunette nodded and looked away with tears falling and an irregular breathing, still nibbling her thumb. Max grabbed her free hand and placed it on her lap, trying to intertwine her fingers with hers -but with the splint it was complicated- and caressing the back

of her hand. The door opened, and Jane quickly removed her hand. It was Jerry, her boss.

- "I don't pay you to cry in the closet, stand and go back to work," the man ordered with an annoyed tone.

- "Give her a break!" Max angrily snapped.

- "I pay her to work, she is here for that, she can cry all she wants after her work!"

- "What th—"

- "I'm coming," Jane cut with a high voice.

Jerry nodded and left them. Jane stood, wiped her face, and blew her nose.

- "You don't have to!" Max said, standing.

- "Yes, I have to," Jane firmly answered. "Look, I'm gonna be okay, I just need...some time..."

- "If you need anything, I'm here."

- "I know."

Max nodded. She took the opportunity of their privacy to give a quick kiss on Jane's cheek, but Jane leaned again for another kiss, on her lips this time. Max couldn't hold her smile when she was kissing her, Jane seemed to enjoy it this time. Maybe the conversation helped her to keep going.

Once Max gone, Jane was again behind her counter, taking care of the zero customer inside. She was glad there was no one because with her red puffy eyes she would have scared them. But Joyce, a bit further, noticed her co-worker's sadness. She approached her with a warm smile.

- "Is everything okay?" the woman softly asked.

- "No, definitely not," Jane sighed.

Joyce pouted, she didn't like to see Jane like that. This girl was fighting hard to just live, but everyone was taking her down. She walked next to her and took her in her arms, to give her some comfort. Jane was a bit surprised by the hug, but she clearly needed it. It was a mom's hug, she was missing it.

## 58. The night

The next days, Jane was feeling better. The sensation in her throat was slowly disappearing thanks to her psychologist, and no one talked to her about the incident, giving the girl more confidence. It was Wednesday, and she invited Max to spend the night with her.

- "You look okay, it's good to see," Max stated, sitting on Jane's bed.

- "Yeah, it's still complicated but the psychologist helps me a lot with it," Jane answered, sitting next to her.

- "It's great Jane, I'm proud of you."

Max gave her an encouraging caress on her cheek with a big smile. Jane was making a lot of progress, and Max was really happy for her. She knew her, and she knew she wasn't really talkative about her feelings and emotions, but she had to, to heal correctly.

But the redhead was feeling a bit ridiculous and ashamed. Since she had this conversation about her discomfort by touching her, she was always thinking to go further, everytime she was seeing her. She had this heat, always growing inside like if she had fever, her heart was racing more and more, and she had this strange sensation between her legs which was disappearing with difficulties.

Jane leaned to kiss her girlfriend. Max placed her hands on Jane's cheeks and kissed her more. It became more passionate, the two girls sharing the same excitement. Max laid down on the bed without breaking the kiss. Jane was now on her, her legs on each side of Max's left leg. Jane's body was so hot! Max couldn't resist to slid one hand under her tee-shirt while the other one was travelling her hair. Jane's body was completely against her, sharing the heat inside her belly with her. Their private parts were at one centimeter to touch each other through their jeans. Max's butterflies were lost in a moving dance, some travelling until between her legs, helped by Jane's hand caressing her belly and her right leg. Max grabbed Jane's collar's leather jacket and took it off before doing the same with Jane's tee-shirt. The other girl was now in bra, but her eyes were looking at her own belly. There were still some bruises on it.

- "Does it hurt?" Max asked.
- "No...Does it...bother you?" Jane answered.
- "Of course not, but if you're not read—"
- "I am, what about you?"
- "More than ever," Max smiled.

Jane had a smile too and leaned again to kiss Max. The redhead took off her tee-shirt and kissed roughly her girlfriend. They were both in bra, breasts against breasts, their chests raising against each other's, breathing heavily. Max felt Jane's hand slowly sliding on her jeans, on her thighs first, then just under her belly to finally reach between her legs. The redhead felt a brutal increase of pleasure, making her bending her back. She broke the kiss to whispered a « oh fuck » of satisfaction, enabling Jane to kiss her jawline, still caressing her. Jane moved her hand and began to unbutton the jeans and unzip it. When Jane slid her hand under her underwear, Max thought she was going to explode, and Jane kissing her neck was making it better. The brunette straightened on her knees, looking at Max with a smile and biting her bottom lip. The redhead placed her hands on Jane's jeans, slowly unbuttoned it, before sliding it down. It was her turn to slid her hand between Jane's legs. She grabbed her girlfriend's arm to get her again in a kiss. Max wasn't sure of what she was doing, but Jane's small moans showed her it wasn't that bad. Jane straightened again, but this time, she took off Max's jeans and underwears and hers, and her splint. Damn, she was so sexy! Jane placed her forehead against Max's before kissing her neck again. She moved her hips and the two wet parts met. Jane kept rubbing faster and faster, making moan Max more and more. She didn't know she could feel so much sensations inside her body, the butterflies became crazy and her private part was going to explode. She didn't want this to end, but the pleasure was too intense and Jane was too good.

The two girls were now laying down next to each other, breathing heavily and looking at the ceiling with their bodies sweating. Max closed her eyes and felt a tear falling.

- "Oh my god, are you okay?" Jane asked with a concerned tone.

- "Yes, yes!" reassured Max reassured. "It's happy tears that all!"

Jane frowned.

- "Yeah, it's weird, I don't even know myself why I'm crying, it's stupid," the redhead chuckled wiping her eyes. "It's just...I never thought I could be like that, I thought I would fall in love with a man and finish my life with him like everyone but...you made me realise it wasn't me, that I'm not like that, that it wouldn't make me happy and I'm glad you did because...I feel good with you, I feel...me."

She turned her head to meet Jane's eyes.

- "I'm sorry, I probably sound like a crazy old woman married for a century with the same man and discovering that she is not into men," Max giggled.

- "No, it was cute," Jane softly said.

Jane gave a quick kiss on Max's shoulder before placing her head on it and smiling to her. Max gently travelled her hand in Jane's hair, and realised she never felt so happy when she was with Gary. She was definitely gay.

The two girls put back their clothes, not wanting Constance to find them like that, and let entered the cat who placed himself between the two girls.



## 59. Scratches

Max, Will, and Jane were in direction of their last period : sport. Max insisted a lot to Jane to change with them. Since everyone knew she was gay, she never dared coming back in the changing room, too scared of the other girls.

- "No, Max, I can't!" Jane struggled, now in front of the door.

- "Yes you can! No one is going to hurt you, I promise," Max firmly said.

- "They will think I'm watching them like pervert!"

- "No, they won't! They will just think that you are confident enough again to change with other girls without having any weird thoughts!"

Jane looked at her with unsure eyes and a heavy breathing.

- "Come on, I'll be with you, if someone says something, believe me, they won't say it twice."

Jane was still unsure, but she followed her girlfriend inside. When she entered, she felt all the looks on her, all wondering why the dyke was there.

- "Yeah, I know, I'm sexy, but if you could look away I would appreciate," Max sharply said.

The other girls surprisingly obeyed and continued to change, back to their conversations. Max saw some space next to Clara and brought Jane here. She knew that Clara never cared that Jane was gay, it was a safe place. The two girls began to change when they heard :

- "Rough night?"

Max and Jane turned to Clara who was smirking. Clara showed Jane's back with her chin. Jane turned her head to see her back and saw scratches on it. Her face became red of embarrassment while Max was trying to hold her laugh by looking away and focusing on her clothes.

- "Um...I, I, I, uh..." Jane stuttered.

- "It's fine, I was just playing with you," Clara reassured. "I'm happy for you, you keep living no matter what, it's...beautiful."

Jane frowned and nodded. She turned to Max who was still laughing and nudged her to make her stop, even if she was amused too.

Once outside, Max ran to Jane and gently pushed her head.

- "Do you know what that means?" Jane asked.

- "What?" Max frowned.

Jane looked around and got closer to Max.

- "Cut your nails," the brunette murmured

The redhead giggled.

- "This is your fault! It's you who made me feel like that!"

- "Shhhh, they are gonna hear you," Jane chuckled.

- "Nobody can understand what we are talking about."

- "Maybe Clara could!"

- "You know what? I think she has a crush on you."

- "Who? Clara? Why do you think that?" Jane asked.

- "She seemed a bit disappointed to not be the person who had a rough night with you, in the tone," Max explained.

- "Oh...I feel awful...is it normal?"

- "You feel sorry for her, it's normal, you understand her feelings. She is a bit hurt, but she will be fine, she will find her Jane."

- "I hope not, Janes are complicated," the brunette joked.

- "Yeah, I already know that!" the redhead chuckled.

- "Maybe I should spend a rough night with her."

- "Yeah, I don't think it's a good idea, you will probably be killed by me."

- "I won't take that risk then!"

The two girls joined Will who was waiting for them. He was always happy to see them, he was feeling safe, even if his bullies didn't come back at school for now, he needed them around him. And Jane was feeling better, it was pleasant to see. Troy joined them too and wrapped his arms around Jane.

- "Why do I have a hug?" Jane smiled.

- "You scared the shit out of me last week, I'm just happy you're okay," the boy softly said.

- "Well, it's thanks to you, so...thank you."

- "When you want."

They both broke the hug, and the boy went a bit further to let the three friends alone.

- "Well, I can't hate him anymore I guess," Max said.

- "Really?" Jane frowned.

- "Yeah, I mean, he seems to become a good guy, because of you, it's great, really."

- "Yeah, I agree, I mean, when he apologized, it was already awesome," Will added. "Thank you for this."

- "Don't thank me, I didn't do anything."

- "You did more than you think."

The teacher whistled, beginning the class. When sport was over, Will ran after Troy outside the changing room.

- "Hey, Troy!" the young boy called.

- "Oh, hey," Troy frowned.

- "Um...I, I wanted to thank you for...apologizing. Even if we seemed a bit cold, we really appreciated it, we were just surprised."

- "It's fine, I understand."

- "Good...I, I wanted to know, do you remember the day when there were sextoys on Jane's locker?"

- "Uh...yes, why ?"

- "I'm not sure, but I wanted to know if you heard what I told to Dustin before we noticed you..."

- "Um...about you being...like Jane? I did," Troy answered.

- "Oh okay..." Will said feeling the panic growing and looking down.

- "I won't tell anyone. I mean, when I knew for Jane I already didn't say anything, I won't hurt you again, I don't want to...I, I never wanted to...I'm sorry..."

- "I know, I understand, you wanted to be accepted, and...you've not been the worse, I think, I think I've forgiven you."

- "Thank you."

The two boys stayed a moment without saying anything, creating an awkward situation.

- "Um...I'll go," Troy said. "It was nice to talk to you, have a nice week-end."

- "Um, yeah, you too," Will answered.

Troy walked away while Will stayed there. Jane and Max joined him a bit later. They accompanied Jane at her work before leaving her alone. But Max didn't leave her alone for a long time because tonight, Jane was staying at her home, and the redhead was excited about this.

## 60. The surprise

Mike, Lucas, Dustin, Will, and Beverly were in front of Max's house. The group reunited to make a surprise to Max for her birthday.

- "You all know she is going to hate us after that, right?" Will stated.

- "Yes, but I'm sure she will have a good day," Lucas answered.

- "When is supposed to arrive Jane?" Mike asked, looking at his watch.

- "I don't know, maybe she didn't have her day," Beverly said.

- "Oh...we can get Max and see her at her work after," Dustin proposed.

- "Sounds good."

The group nodded and went to the door. They knocked and it was her mother who opened them. She smiled and invited them to enter.

- "She is still asleep, she invited a friend yesterday, they went to sleep really late," the mother explained.

The friends just nodded. The mother told them she had to go to work and can't stay with them. She took her stuff and left the house.

- "A friend?" Lucas frowned.

- "Jane is already there?" Mike asked.

- "There is only one way to know!" Dustin said.

The curly-haired boy walked in direction of Max's room, followed by Mike, Lucas, and Beverly, Will, not wanting to be intrusive, stayed in the kitchen. Dustin slowly opened the door before entering in the dark room. They entered, with only the light of the corridor to guide them. The four friends stood in line, Mike at the right, then Lucas, Dustin, and finally Bev. They couldn't clearly see, but what they saw was enough. Max was on her back, her head turned to the window on

her right, with Jane on her, very close to her face, both asleep under the blanket.

- "What do we do now?" Lucas murmured.

- "Um...they are pretty close, you don't think?" Dustin stated.

- "They are pretty good friends, at least Max is not bothered by Jane's homosexuality, it's pretty cool," Mike said.

Bev couldn't believe them, how had they not understood it yet? She was trying to hold her smile, but the situation was too funny. Max began to move in her bed, the light from the corridor probably woke her up. She opened an eye and looked at her alarm clock.

- "Jane," the girl mumbled, lightly shaking her. "Jane."

- "Mmh?"

- "Move, I can't feel my arm."

- "You don't need your arm now, I wanna sleep."

Max pouted and raised Jane's head to move her arm. She looked at her left and saw her bunch of friends.

- "What the fuck!?" the girl exclaimed. "What are you doing here!?"

At her words, Jane opened her eyes and took support on her arms, showing a bit what was under the blanket.

- "Oh my god!" Lucas told in surprise, putting his hand on his eyes.

- "You are naked!" Dustin stated.

Max and Jane both looked at each other, realising he was right, and the redhead grabbed her girlfriend to bring her back on her again, to hide it. Lucas and Dustin were lost in a « Oh my god » symphony not knowing where to look while Mike was all red, and Bev was laughing.

- "Get out of my room, pervets!" Max ordered, throwing them a

pillow.

Dustin and Lucas half ran to the outside while Mike was slowly walking outside, Bev, the last one. Before closing the door, she turned to the two girls and raised her two thumbs to them with a big smile. Max giggled and threw another pillow to her, making her close the door.

The four friends arrived in the living room loudly, while Will was just frowning, not understanding what was happening.

- "What's wrong?" the young boy finally asked.

- "Jane and Max were naked!" Dustin and Lucas explained at the same time.

- "You should have seen their faces!" Bev told, still laughing.

Will didn't answer. He didn't know what to think about this, Jane was supposed to date Bev, right? Maybe it was just a friendly naked night. The two girls joined them, like that they would have their answers.

- "Um...if you have questions it's now," Max told. "Not you Mike."

- "What!? But why!?"

- "I'm sure you have questions. Dirty questions."

- "God, you know me too well..."

- "So?" Max encouraged.

- "Is it...serious or just for sex?" Lucas asked.

- "Serious."

- "Since when?" Dustin continued.

- "Since...a month ago, something like that."

- "A month!? You've been hiding it from us a month!?" Mike loudly stated.

- "Um, yeah."

- "Come on guys, I don't wanna be mean but you have been completely blind!" Bev intervened.

- "You knew it!?" Mike frowned.

- "Of course I knew it! Max would have been lost without me."

- "But, we thought it was you who was dating Jane!"

- "What!?" the three girls exclaimed.

- "You were always hugging her or kissing her so we thought you were dating," Will explained.

- "Oh! No, I was doing it because Max couldn't, to not have problems."

The four boys nodded, understanding everything now.

- "Since when you're gay?" Will asked.

- "Since Jane," Max answered, placing her hand on her girlfriend's shoulder.

- "What happened to the girl you kissed in the changing room?" Dustin frowned.

- "Um...she is...my girlfriend now," Jane answered with a frown.

- "You, you kissed her?"

- "She kissed me."

Mike, Will, Dustin, and Lucas all dropped their jaws. It was more than they were expecting! Since all this time their two friends were having a secret life!

- "Why didn't you tell us!? I mean, when Will told me he was gay, I didn't tell anyone!" stated Dustin, his arms in cross.

Will wide opened his eyes and looked down. Mike, Lucas, Max, and



Bev frowned at him and Dustin, Jane kept living like if nothing happened while Dustin pinched his lips together and closed his hands, realising he just did.

- "Oh shit, buddy I'm so sorry," Dustin apologized.

- "It's fine, I was going to tell them anyway, I just planned to tell them one by one, that's all," Will lightly chuckled.

- "You won some time like that," Jane said, preparing a piece of toast with cherry jam.

- "You don't seem surprised," Lucas stated.

- "He had already told me, last week."

- "And now you understand better why we didn't tell you!" Max added.

- "But why Bev knew? If there is one person who is not discreet it's her!" Mike told.

- "She thought I was hating Jane, I told her to reassure her. And, I needed some advice."

- "Can we eat now?" Will intervened.

Max put everything she had in her cupboards and placed it on her table, with Jane's help, while her friends were sitting around it.

- "Why are you even here?" Max asked.

- "Oh shit! We forgot to do it!" Lucas told.

- "Happy birthday!" Mike, Lucas, Dustin, Will, and Beverly wished at the same time.

- "Oh guys, you really hate me for making this," Max smiled.

- "You're welcome," Mike said.

- "At least the surprise is successful !" Dustin told.

- "Yeah, for everyone!" Lucas chuckled.

The group all laughed with him. While they were eating, Mike, Lucas, and Dustin couldn't stop looking at the two girls insistently.

- "I don't know how you hadn't noticed it before," Bev murmured to Will.

- "We were convinced it was you and her, we never thought Max was attracted to girls."

- "But, look at them, they look at each other like if there were no one else!"

- "Yeah, now it's obvious! They look happy together."

- "Clearly."

Jane and Max felt the three boys' looks on them and stopped eating to frown at them.

- "What!?" Max snapped.

- "Oh...nothing," Lucas smiled. "We just wait you...to do something..."

- "Do what? Just because we are together doesn't mean we can't just sit next to each other and talk normally!"

- "I know! It's just...it's all new."

Max rolled her eyes. She knew they wouldn't stop looking at them like that. She turned to Jane, grabbed gently her face, and placed a soft kiss on her lips before breaking it.

- "Happy?" Max asked.

- "It was cool," Dustin smiled.

Jane and Max looked at each other but this time with a smile and a small blush on their cheeks.

- "Who is on top?" Mike asked.

Max didn't answer, throwing him a piece of bread instead.

- "I wanted to try," the boy chuckled.

- "Are you going to the Spring Dance together?" Will asked.

- "Um...we, we don't know...I mean, it's kinda risky," Jane told.

- "Okay, let's hope you will."

- "And you, Will ? Who are you gonna invite?" Mike asked.

- "I, I don't know...I will go alone, probably."

- "Don't be stupid, we will be with you," Lucas said, wrapping his arm around his friend. "I mean, Mike didn't find anyone!"

- "I did! I asked Alison, and she said yes!"

- "Oh..."

- "You could go with me," Bev proposed. "I mean, three boys invited me, but I refused all of them, I could be your « date » for the night."

- "Really?" Will smiled. "I, I would love to."

- "Great, a good thing done!" Lucas exclaimed.

The friends kept eating their breakfast before leaving the house. They took Max to the mall, to the arcade, then they watched a movie to finally finish at the skatepark. All Max's favorites activities, with all the people she loved. It was a nice birthday.

## 61. The Spring Dance

The party met in front of the gymnasium. They were all stressed, it was their last dance like that in their High School, it had something special. But the more two stressed were Max and Jane, both not really ready for this night. Max opted for something looking like a suit but with a normal tee-shirt under the jacket and black jeans while Jane was wearing a dress with her leather jacket. Max was proud of Jane, of course she was looking very pretty in this dress, but she was showing and assuming her chest in front of everyone. Everyone was with their dates, Lucas with Gabrielle, Mike with Alison, Dustin with Suzie, Will with Bev, and Max with Jane. Once ready, they entered the gymnasium. There were already lots of people inside, dancing on the field. But they didn't join them, they preferred looking for a free table. Once sat, they didn't know what to do, it wasn't really the kind of place they liked to be. But Jane stood and began to walk away.

- "Where are you going!?" Bev asked.

- "I'm hungry!" Jane sharply answered, keeping walking.

They all frowned to Max.

- "She is pissed because we can't dance together!" the redhead explained. "Don't worry, it will pass."

They all nodded. They were feeling sorry for their two friends. They couldn't dance together like everyone else just because they were two girls. Will was feeling guilty, he was gay but he was with a girl and no one knew he was gay. Jane came back with a plate full of food and two drinks. She placed it between her and Max.

- "You didn't bring something for us?" Dustin asked with a disappointed tone.

- "I'm not dating all of you, you can go by your own, and I don't have enough arms anyway!" Jane answered with an angry tone.

Max smirked. She thought Jane was cute when she was in a bad

mood, but she was never mean to her, it was even cuter.

Later in the night, the moment the two girls were fearing happened. A slow dance song began and lots of couple went on the field. Their friends hesitated, but Jane ordered them to go. Other people weren't dancing, majority because they were alone or making out, but at least the two girls were not the only ones to not dance. Max turned to Jane who was clenching her jaw and looking down.

- "Dance with me," Max said with assurance.

- "What?" Jane frowned.

- "Look, I don't want the assholes to think they won, I wanna dance with you, I won't hide my whole life my relation with you! I mean, when we live together in our apartment with our cat, and when we have dates in town, when you are a cop and you come to see me in my restaurant when you are hungry, I won't hide it Jane, I want to dance with you, I want to hold your hand in the street, I want to kiss you when we want, I want all of this!"

- "You...you really think of all of this? I mean, the apartment, me coming to your restaurant..."

- "Um...I, I don't want to scare you but, sometimes, I like to imagine where we could be in a few years...I know it's a bit early but...why not..."

Jane couldn't hold her smile. All her words warmed and melt her heart. It was so reassuring to see Max seeing a futur with her inside, she couldn't resist to that. Jane stood and held out her hand.

- "Let's dance."

The redhead smiled and placed her hand in Jane's before standing. She could feel that Jane was stressing, but she was still doing it. Her girlfriend took her in the middle of the field before placing her hands on her waist, Max's hands around her neck.

- "Don't look at them Jane, just look at me," Max softly said.

- "I'm trying," Jane answered with a shaking voice.

Max was feeling her hands shaking on her waist. Jane kept looking around with worried eyes. Max placed her forehead on Jane's to force the girl to look at her.

- "Ignore them, we are with our friends, no one will bother you," Max tried to reassure.

- "Yeah...how can you be this relax?"

- "Because I'm with you, you make me soft. And gay," the redhead joked.

Jane had a small chuckle. Max put her hands on Jane's cheeks to caress them. She wanted her to relax, and Jane was very sensitive to touch. Jane kept looking around but something got her attention.

- "What's wrong?" Max frowned.

- "Look," Jane said, showing behind with her chin.

Max turned her head and saw Clara dancing with a girl, and two boys dancing together, and more going to the field, assuming who they were.

- "I told you she was going to find her Jane," Max said.

Jane smiled. Seeing other people like them, dancing with everyone was giving her some hope and courage. She leaned to Max and kissed her. The redhead was surprise but happily accepted the kiss. When they broke the kiss, both were smiling and blushing. Max put her head on Jane's shoulder, her face hid in her neck while Jane wrapped her arms around her to get her closer to her. For the first time, Jane was feeling normal and allowed to be. This Spring Dance was the beginning of something new.

## 62. New papers

Monday morning. Jane arrived at her locker with a bit apprehension. She didn't know if it would be worse or the same. She saw no tags on it, which was a good thing. Before she could open it, Max appeared next to her, leaned against the lockers.

- "Hey Jane," the redhead smiled.

- "Hey, are you okay?" Jane asked.

- "Yes, I had some things in my locker."

- "Oh shit, I knew it was a bad idea!" the brunette got worked up.

- "Calm down," Max chuckled. "It's fans' letters!"

Jane frowned to her. Fans' letters? What did it mean? Max opened Jane's locker, making fall papers too. Jane's heart stopped, she looked at it like if it was death. The redhead crouched to pick it up and stood next to her girlfriend.

- "Relax Jane, I'm sure it's the same as me."

Max opened the first paper. Jane was surprised to not see an insult or a wish of death on it. It was a thanks. Someone was thanking her, but she didn't know why! Max opened another one, it was Clara, telling her that without them dancing, no other gays would have done it. The last one was a picture of two guys of the Football team holding hands, with a thank you behind it. It was all of this, just gays who managed to assume, thanking her to be the first one.

- "See, I told you you would like it."

Jane found nothing to answer. She had tears in her eyes, happy tears. She never thought she could have such nice words just for her in her locker one day. Max noticed her emotions and gave a small caress on her cheek. Now she could.

- "Hey girls," a girl voice said behind them.

The two girls frowned before turning. It was Clara with a girl next to her.

- "I, I...(clears her throat) First, I want to present you Anna, my girlfriend."

The blonde girl waved to them while Max and Jane nodded to salute her. Anna gave a small kiss to her girlfriend before letting her talk to them.

- "We are in art together," Clara explained. "Thank you, a lot, for everything...When I learned you were lesbian, I began to realise that, maybe I could be a bit like you, that's why I was so curious, you were the only one who could answer me...I'm, I'm glad you found someone, I wasn't expecting Max but it's even better!"

- "It's always better when I'm involved," Max joked.

Jane and Clara chuckled, not really surprised by her remark.

- "I didn't know when I told « rough night », the rough girl was just next to you," Clara told.

- "Yeah, it was actually funny," Jane smiled.

- "I'm not that rough!" Max intervened.

- "You scratched my back!"

- "You didn't even feel it!"

- "Do we have to talk about it now?" Jane murmured.

Max pouted and stopped talking, a bit killing Jane with her eyes.

- "You are very cute together," Clara stated. "I gotta go, I'm happy for you."

The two girls watched their friend walking away.

- "I told you, we have fans," Max smirked. "How is it to be a superstar?"



- "I, I don't know, it's kinda great," Jane answered.

- "Okay, what's wrong?"

- "Nothing."

- "Please Jane, you don't think I don't know how you work since all this time? You are biting your lip on the left, you lightly frown and you look to the floor. You are worried."

- "I...I just wondered how many time it will last until it becomes like before..."

- "Maybe it won't."

Jane looked again at her girlfriend. Max was so confident, she was dreaming to be like that too! And maybe she was right, people would definitely stop bullying her for this. She should enjoy those moments of peace for now. Max held out her hand that Jane grabbed it with a smile. They began to walk in the halls, under some curious looks.

- "I won't go back in a zoo ever!" Jane told.

- "Don't worry, they will get used to it," Max smiled, squeezing her hand.

On their way to their class, they saw Abigail at her locker. It was covered of insults, the young girl seemed distraught, she was shaking and her eyes were tired. Some people around her were insulting her and pushing her against her locker.

- "Hey! Stop that!" Jane intervened.

The teens around her pushed her one last time before going away. Abigail was looking at Jane with angry while Max wasn't understanding what her girlfriend was doing.

- "Are you okay?" Jane asked.

- "I don't want your fucking pity! This is because of you! You and your fucking disease!" Abigail got angry.

- "It hurts, right?"

- "Fuck you!"

- "Maybe one day, you will understand."

- "Fuck you! I FUCK ALL OF YOU FUCKING FAGS!" Abigail yelled with tears in her eyes.

The blonde girl collapsed on the floor, crying while Max and Jane kept walking.

- "Why are you kind with her?" Max asked.

- "She is alone, she lost everything she had," Jane told.

- "She deserves it! She treated you worse, you don't have to have a kind of compassion for her!"

- "But I have, I don't want her to live that."

- "Well, I want! She almost killed you Jane!"

- "Yes, and maybe she will kill herself because of them, why should I feel okay with that?"

Max stopped walking, forcing her girlfriend to stop.

- "Did you ever...think of it? Suicide?" Max asked with a weak voice.

- "I, I had bad periods..." Jane told, looking down.

- "Did you ever try?"

- "I...I almost tried..."

Jane took deep breaths to not cry again.

- "What make you stop?"

- "The only person who never stopped loving me...she wasn't there but, I thought of her and how destroyed she would be...it was so selfish to make her suffering because I couldn't handle mine, it would

have kill her," Jane explained with a small anger and tears in her eyes.

- "I'm sorry...when was it?" Max softly asked.

- "A few months after I got out of the hospital, after Loren..."

Max felt a bit guilty for asking all of that in public. She got closer to her and wrapped her arms around her to hug her.

- "I'm glad you didn't," Max told.

- "Yeah, I'm glad I didn't too," Jane said.

Max released a bit her arms and kissed her girlfriend on her lips. Jane surprisedly kissed back, with even a smile. Dustin wrapping his arms around them cut them.

- "My favorite lesbians in the world!" the boy exclaimed with a big smile.

- "You are the best to ruin everything!" Max joked.

- "I'm just happy to see you kissing in public!"

Dustin broke the hug and tousled their hairs.

- "Come on! We are not cats!" Jane chuckled.

- "Yeah I know! I'm happy because when Max is in a relationship, she becomes really cheesy."

- "That's not true!" Max told with an upset tone.

- "Yes it is, and you know that," Dustin smiled.

- "I'm cheesy only with Jane, not you."

- "I know, but it's still cute."

Max rolled her eyes while Dustin and Jane giggled. The three friends went in direction of their class, Max wrapping her arm around Jane's waist, wanting her to stay the closest possible to her, especially after

the conversation they had. She was loving her too much.

## 63. Unexpected visit

It was Saturday and, as usual, Jane was working. She was in front of the counter, alone, reading a magazine. Joyce let her alone, she had some things to buy and trusted Jane enough to leave her alone at the store. Jane kinda appreciated the gesture, she didn't think it was because she was a good employee but more because there were any customers. But this time, someone entered. Jane looked up, ready to welcome them but she didn't. She froze. This man was not here to buy something. She saw him only one time, but she knew who he was.

Neil was standing in front of her, eyes full of anger, nostrils dilated, heavy breathing, torso forward, and fists closed. He walked to her with heavy steps, grabbed her by her jacket, and threw her above the counter on the shelves with cigarettes boxes. Jane fell on her belly, her face hitting the floor, making her more dizzy than before. Her back was hurting so much that she thought it was stuck. She tried to stand, taking support on her shaking arms, but Neil grabbed again her jacket and threw her behind. She hit another shelf with batteries on it, which all fell on her.

The man walked to her and tried to grab her again, but Jane kicked his knee, making him lose his balance and falling on the floor, enabling the girl to stand. Before he could do the same, she kicked him in his torso, cutting his breathing.

She was going to leave, but the man grabbed her ankle and made her fall on the floor. He placed himself on her, crushing her body, before punching her in the face. Jane felt a brutal pain in her nose and a liquid flowing of it, going to her mouth. Neil punched her in the jaw many time, getting her dizzy. Her vision began to be blurry because of the tears and she could hardly breath with the blood flowing in her throat. He grabbed her jacket and raised her face to his and screamed :

- "STAY AWAY FROM MY DAUGHTER!"

- "STEP DAUGHTER!" Jane yelled.

She spat on him the blood she had in her mouth and hit his face with her head. The man fell on his side while Jane rolled on the other side, spitting the blood on the floor and trying to catch her breath. She tried to stand, but Neil kicked her in her face. She stayed unconscious a few seconds. A pain in her shoulder woke her up. Neil was hitting the floor with her body, and managed to dislocate her left shoulder. When he was over, he stood and began to take off his belt. Jane tried to crawl on the floor but her wounds were sending her electricity in her entire body, making every movement a sorrow.

The belt was now out. He whipped her with it, again and again. The young girl tried to protect her face the best she could with her hand, but it was not enough. She could feel every hit on her skin, cutting her face, cutting her hand, making her bleed more. She saw no end to this, she didn't know if he was going to kill her or not.

Neil brutally stopped hitting her. Jane's vision was still blurry and her ears were buzzing, she didn't know what was happening. She slowly opened her eyes and saw someone yelling at him. When her vision became clearer, she saw Neil going away and recognised Joyce. The woman crouched next to Jane and helped her to sit.

- "Are you okay?" Joyce asked with a concerned tone. "I called an ambulance and the police, just stay awake Jane, okay?"

She examined the young girl and sat her against a shelf, which wasn't on the floor, and went to the back store to take her first aid kit. When she came back, she disinfected Jane's cuts and pressed her nose, holding Jane against her chest.

A bit further, the man was in direction of his home, bleeding from his lips and nose, but with angry eyes. When he entered, his wife and Max were in the living room.

- "Oh my god! What happened!?" Susan asked with a worried tone.

But Neil ignored her. He went directly to Max, grabbed her by her tee-shirt with his bloody hands, and blocked her against a wall, his face close to hers. Max was struggling and breathing heavily with her nose, but her step-father was stronger than her.

- "I know what you are," Neil firmly told. "You're gonna stop that shit, do you hear me?"

- "What are you talking about!?" Max replied, scared.

- "If you don't, next time, I kill her."

Max frowned. She understood what he was talking about.

- "What have you done to her!?"

- "What she deserved!" Neil yelled, blocking more Max. "Break up with her, those persons are not human! Am I clear!?"

She didn't answer. She felt the tears coming in her eyes, and she didn't want to break up with Jane, she was in love with her!

- "AM I CLEAR!?" Neil repeated, louder.

- "YES! Yes, I, I will," Max said with a shaking voice and tears falling.

- "Good."

Neil let her go before slapping her and leaving the house. Max collapsed on the floor trying to hold her tears while her mother was just standing there, under shock.

- "Thanks for your help!" Max snapped.

She stood and went to her room. She didn't want to break up with Jane, but she had to or both of them would have problems.

## 64. The break up

Max arrived early at school. She wanted to see Jane before there were too many people around, she was sure she was going to cry and didn't want to do it in front of everyone. She saw Jane at her locker and decided to join her. She had her left arm in a sling, a bandage on her nose, and some bruises on her face.

- "Hey," the redhead softly said.

- "Hey," Jane answered with an upset tone.

She turned and noticed a red mark on Max's cheek.

- "It's him too?"

The redhead nodded.

- "He wants me to break up with you."

- "Oh..."

- "I don't want to," Max told.

- "Me neither, but you have to," Jane said.

- "I don't know..." the redhead sighed.

- "Max, he won't stop, you have to, we have to stop before he kills both of us!"

- "I can't do that Jane! This is too hard, you can't make me gay and leaving me like that!"

- "I'm not! I don't want you to finish like Loren!"

Max took a deep breath and rubbed her face. She felt stuck in this situation. Clearly, Jane was more important for her than what Neil was thinking! He wasn't her family, he had no right to tell her what to do!



- "We could find another solution, without breaking up," Max told with tears in her eyes.

- "Okay...um...you don't think it's too risky?"

- "I refuse him to control my life, I love you and I hate him, my choice is made."

Jane had a weak smirk. Even if she was terrified by all of this, she felt a pleasant warmth in her heart and stomach. It was the first time Max had told her she loved her.

- "I love you too," Jane smiled.

Max blushed and a smile grew on her face, even if her eyes were sad.

- "So, what do we do?" the redhead asked.

- "Um...we could see each other less, until...I don't know..." Jane proposed.

- "He won't change his mind."

- "I know."

- "But next year I'll be in college, so..."

Jane nodded before closing her locker. She saw that Max was sad, a tear was falling on her cheek, and wiped it with her thumb. Her pain in her shoulder came back and brought her back to reality because she had another problem.

- "He is an asshole," Jane angrily stated because of the pain. "In two weeks I'm supposed to take tests for many police academies! I'm screwed now!"

- "Oh shit! How you're gonna do!?"

- "I'll take some rest and try anyway! I have nothing to lose!"

- "You should take your Saturday," Max said.

- "I've been fired, so my Saturday is free and so are the next ones!"

Max found nothing to answer. Nothing could cheer her up. She had all the reasons to be mad, Neil just ruined all her chance to enter in a police academy, it was her dream! She just wrapped her arms around her, to comfort her. Jane hugged her with difficulties, her ribs were hurting a lot, and every movement with her arms were complicated.

- "I'm gonna miss you," Max told, breaking the hug.

- "I'm not far, I'll still be there."

- "Yeah, I know, but if he saw us together, he will kill you!"

- "Well, that sucks," Jane pouted.

- "Kinda," the redhead chuckled.

Max grabbed Jane's bandaged hand and began to walk in the halls with her. People were looking less at them and those who were, it was to smile to them. They have been joined by Mike whose face faded when he saw his two friends.

- "Shit, what happened to you!?"

- "Neil," the two girls answered.

- "Damn! What a shithead!"

- "Yeah, he wants us to break up!" Max told with anger.

- "Oh...and you did?"

- "Nope, did I ever listen to Neil before?" the redhead rhetorically asked.

- "Good point," Mike smiled. "What are you gonna do?"

- "I'll tell him we are no longer together, it was just a phase, blah blah blah, those kind of shit."

- "Okay, cool," the black-haired boy nodded. "How did he find out?"

- "Um...(looks at Jane who was looking at her too) I have no idea! Maybe someone told him or he saw us, I don't know...But he was

really angry, he threatened to kill her!"

- "Shit, don't laugh with that, I'm practically sure he would!"

- "Me too!"

- "I won't let him, even if he kicked my ass last Saturday, I can kick his ass too!" Jane intervened.

- "You already did! His nose is broken and now he is always whistling when he breaths, I can hear him coming like that!" Max explained with excitement.

- "He didn't go to hospital?" Mike frowned.

- "No, because he would have to explain that he assaulted an underage girl."

- "But he could invent a story!"

- "He has too much ego, if he goes to the hospital, it would mean that Jane had won, he is too proud, but for now, it's just pathetic," Max chuckled.

- "Oh! Nice one Jane," Mike smiled.

Jane saluted with her head, like if she just finished a show, which made laugh her friends. The three friends went to their first period, answering the questions of their other friends who hadn't heard the story.

## 65. Bad news

Three weeks passed. Neil believed Max when she told him she broke up with Jane. He still yelled at her for doing it in the first place, but he didn't slap her this time. The two girls managed to see each other quickly when they could, majority of the time at school, but they would have preferred going on a date like before.

Jane left an entire week for her tests. She had three, one in Seattle, one in New-York, and one in Miami. It was physical and psychological tests, and the week after, they were supposed to receive a letter to tell them their results.

But Jane didn't come back after her tests. Max was beginning to worry, she had no news of her since she left. And apparently the party began to worry too, they kept asking her where Jane was. She tried to call her, but no one answered, not even her sister. Maybe they decided to extend their trip at Miami, but missing three days of school, it was a lot. Mike proposed them to pass at her apartment after class, they obviously all agreed.

Once in front of the door, Max knocked insistently on the door, hoping some movements from the inside. But nothing.

- "It's weird," Dustin told.

- "Maybe they had a problem to come back," Will pouted.

- "She would have called," Max said.

- "You're sure ?" Mike frowned.

- "She would have called !" the redhead affirmed with irritation in her voice.

None of them tried to contradict her. She was more than worried, she began to wonder if she wasn't dead! One of the neighbours left his apartment. The teens asked him if he saw Jane, but the man hadn't seen or heard them for days now. It didn't reassure Max, she was believing more that Jane was dead. They sat on the stairs, waiting for

a sign.

After two hours, the sign appeared. They heard footsteps coming from under, and saw Jane. They all stood, relieved to see her. But the girl didn't seem happy to see them. She completely ignored them, opened her door ,and slammed it behind her, letting her friends outside.

- "At least she is not dead," Lucas stated.

- "She is sad, have you seen her eyes? They were red, like if she cried," Beverly told.

- "Jane! What wrong!?" Max loudly said from behind the door.

- "Did she close it?" Dustin asked, moving his hand in direction of the knob.

- "(taps his hand) We don't enter in people's home with no authorization!" Bev firmly told.

- "Sorry..."

They stayed a moment in front of her door. They heard her living her life, walking in her apartment, taking a shower, going to the toilets until the door opened, but without Jane behind it, like if a ghost opened it. The party hesitated, but slowly entered. By the noises they were hearing, Jane was in her room, but they decided to not bother her for now and to wait in the kitchen-living room. After a moment, Jane slowly appeared in her corridor, taking support on the wall at her right.

- "Is everything okay?" Lucas asked with a concerned tone.

Jane bit her bottom lip on her left and lightly shook her head to say no, avoiding their eyes.

- "What's wrong? Your tests didn't end well?" Mike said.

- "Your arm still hurt?" Lucas asked.

- "They didn't let you try?" told Will told.

- "My sister is dead," Jane quickly answered with a shaking voice.

Six jaws dropped. The silence after this confession felt like to weigh tons. How was it possible!? She was so young! What happened to her!? And when did it happen!? They all looked at each other, not really knowing what to say or do, it was so unexpected! Dustin opened his arms to take her in his arms, but she gently refused.

- "Everybody hugs me since days, and if you do, I'll cry again and I'm a bit tired of it," Jane explained with a tired voice and tears in her eyes.

Dustin nodded, to tell her he understood.

- "We...we are sorry..." Lucas said with emotion in his voice.

- "Yeah..."

- "We should let you alone...to think about this..." Beverly told.

They all nodded and began to leave, all squeezing her arm to show their supports. Will stopped next to her.

- "If you need...uh, an adult for...whatever reason, support or life questions, my mom will be happy to help you," the young boy told.

- "Do you think she could come with me at the funeral?" Jane asked with a high voice and some tears falling.

- "I can ask her, when is it?"

Jane took off a paper from her pocket with all the information about it on it. He grabbed the paper and smiled to her.

- "Thank you," Jane said, wiping her eyes and taking a deep breath.

Will nodded and left the apartment. Max was the last one, she gently grabbed her hand before going in direction of the outside, but Jane didn't let go her hand.

- "You...you think you could stay?" Jane shyly asked.

- "Of course I can," Max weakly smiled.

The redhead made a movement to tell the others to go without her. When the door closed, Max grabbed more her hand and placed the other one on her back.

- "What happened?" Max softly asked.

- "She had been hit by a car," Jane answered, nibbling her thumb to hold her tears. "She died on the spot..."

- "Oh Jane, I'm so sorry..."

- "I know, I know...I don't know what I'm gonna do now..."

Max opened her mouth but no words came. She had never been in this situation, she didn't know what to tell her to make her feel a bit better, it was complicated.

- "Do you wanna eat?" Max asked.

- "I'm not hungry..."

- "Do you need a hug?"

Jane's tears began to fall and the girl nodded. She burst into tears in her girlfriend's arms, evacuating all her pain and sadness she had accumulated those last days. Hearing her crying like that, totally breaking down, broke Max's heart. She let drop some tears too, not supporting Jane's sadness.

When Jane finished crying, she stayed a moment in Max' arms before breaking the hug to wipe her face and blow her nose.

- "I'm going to prepare something to eat," Max softly said.

- "I'm not hungry," Jane answered with a sad voice.

- "I know, but I'm pretty sure you didn't eat today, and maybe yesterday too."

Max was right, but Jane still didn't want to eat. She didn't know why

she should eat whereas her sister couldn't eat anymore. She wasn't understanding why she was keeping breathing whereas Constance wasn't breathing anymore, why she could still wake up whereas her sister couldn't. She didn't know why she was alive, whereas everyone tried to kill her, whereas Constance was dead. It wasn't fair and now, she was alone. She lost her only family.

The redhead grabbed her hand and accompanied her to the table in the middle of the kitchen. Jane sat on a chair, staring into space, and nibbling her thumb, while Max was searching in the fridge and the cupboards something to cook. It was sadly empty, Jane probably didn't have the time to go to supermarket. All she found was pastas and creamy cheese sauce. It was a good mix. She began to boil the water when she saw Cat entering the room. The poor animal looked at Max with sad eyes before desperately meowing, like if he was calling Constance. He slowly walked, his tail down, to finally lay down in a corner. Jane didn't even look at him, both in the same darkness.

Once ready, Max prepared a plate for both of them, and placed it on the table. Jane didn't eat, she didn't even look at it. Max began to eat like to encourage her to do the same.

- "Just one," Max told.

- "No," Jane mumbled with an irritated tone.

- "You're gonna collapse if you don't eat."

- "I don't care."

The redhead pouted, she didn't know what to say. Instead, she just grabbed her hand and squeezed.

- "I know you're suffering a lot," Max began. "If you wanna talk, about her, about your feelings, your emotions, I'm here. If you need anything, you just need to ask me, I'll be there."

Jane just nodded. Knowing that someone was there for her warmed a bit her broken heart. She knew she could count on her. She took her fork, and began to slowly eat, even if it was a bit against her volonte.



Max smiled to her to encourage her. Even if Jane hadn't finished her plate, she still ate, it was enough for the redhead.

Max proposed her to watch something at the TV to change a bit her mind. Jane didn't say anything, she just sat on the couch, she didn't care of the program anyway. After a moment, Jane laid down, her legs on Max's laps and fell asleep. The redhead hadn't the heart to wake her up and let her sleep on the couch. She took some pillows and a blanket and installed herself next to the couch before falling asleep.

In the middle of the night, a fast breathing woke her up. She opened her eyes and turned to the couch, seeing Jane sitting, calming her breath.

- "Is everything okay?" the redhead asked, making start Jane.

- "Fuck, you scared me!" Jane told.

- "Sorry..."

- "It's fine, I just had...a weird dream."

- "You wanna talk about it?"

- "It's gonna be fast. I was hugging Constance and she just disappeared," Jane explained, feeling her throat tightening. "Why are you on the floor? You know I have a bed."

- "I didn't want to let you alone."

- "You could have at least come on the couch with me."

- "I thought you would have preferred having your own space."

- "Yeah...thank you...But please, take my bed, you're gonna hurt your back."

- "I'm fine, don't worry for me," Max reassured.

- "I didn't ask you to stay to let you sleeping like a homeless!"

- "You ask me to stay because you didn't want to be alone, so, I stay with you. You know I'm gonna insist."

- "Yeah, I know that! (sighs) Then, let's go to my bed."

The brunette stood and helped her girlfriend to do the same. Max grabbed the pillows and blanket and followed Jane until her room. The two girls laid down in the bed, Max on Jane's left.

- "Do you want a hug? Or...a kiss or anything?" Max asked.

- "No, I'm good," Jane answered.

- "Okay, try to sleep, goodnight."

Jane closed her eyes but all she could see was her sister. She was unable to sleep without being hurt, without having this feeling of emptiness inside her, like if, there was no soul anymore. She had so many worries now, Constance was her guide, her pillar, her motivation! Even becoming a cop seemed insipid.

## 66. Funeral

When Will told his mother about Jane's situation, she didn't hesitate one second to give her her support. She was driving her, and Max, at her sister's funeral. No one was talking, Jane looking outside, waiting for this awful day to end. Joyce had been surprised by Jane's clothes. She was wearing a Pink Floyd tee-shirt, black jeans, black boots, a red sport jacket, it wasn't really usual at a funeral. Even Max was wearing something more...appropriate, well, she was just all black, but it was sober.

Jane was stressing a lot. She called only two persons, Constance's best friend and girlfriend. But she knew that some people of her family heard the news because someone insisted to have a religious ceremony at the church, everything that Jane was hating.

They arrived in front of a church with many cars. Max was surprised because she knew the blonde girl sitting on the stairs. It was Robin, a girl who was working with Steve at Scoops Ahoy before. Why was she here? Next to her was a black woman with long braids, wearing a black suit.

When they got out of the car, Jane went to them while Joyce and Max stayed a bit behind.

- "Hey Jane," the black woman doftly greeted, taking her in her arms. "How are you?"

- "Not good, and you?"

- "Same."

She broke the hug and greeted Robin with a smile. The blonde girl had red puffy eyes and a sad smile to Jane.

- "It's not your idea, this ceremony, right?" the black woman asked.

- "Definitely not!" Jane answered.

- "Um...Do you introduce us to them?"

- "Oh yeah, sorry, um...this is Joyce, a friend's mother, and Max, my girlfriend, and this is Monique, Constance's best friend and Robin, Constance's girlfriend."

The four women shook each other's hands to salute.

- "I already know you, right?" Robin frowned.

- "Um, yeah, we know Steve," Max answered.

- "Yeah, that's right."

Jane took a deep breath before entering the church, followed by the four women. Once inside, all the eyes were pointed at her. She began to walk between the rows, under the pedantic looks of the people around, until an old lady stopped her.

- "You shouldn't be here," the old woman told.

- "She is...was my sister, I have all the right to be here!" Jane angrily answered.

- "You never show any respect in God, and today again you provoke everyone by wearing those...clothes."

- "I'm gonna stay, whether you like it or not! But, I don't understand why you're all here!? We had no news of all of you during years, I don't even know all of them! This is so hypocritical!"

- "She was family."

- "No, she was MY family, you, you never existed for us! When I needed a family, you all refused to raise me, her, she abandoned her life in Paris to come back here and take care of me!"

The old woman and Jane stared a moment. The old lady was clenching her jaw, she didn't seem to really like Jane a lot, she gave a quick look to the people behind her before watching Jane again.

- "Who are those people!?"

- "Family, and friends."

The old woman didn't insist. She grumbled something inaudible and walked away. But an old man this time approached Jane.

- "Still not normal!?" he asked.

- "Still not dead!?" Jane snapped.

He just walked away.

- "Who were they?" Joyce asked.

- "My grand-parents, I saw them only twice."

- "Real assholes," Monique added.

- "Yeah, I'm glad they didn't want me in their life, I would have been frustrated."

Joyce placed a comforting hand on Jane's shoulder and squeezed it. They kept walking, ignoring the others trying to talk to Jane, and sat on the bench at the first row.

- "You're not ashamed to sit next to...this!?" a man angrily asked.

- "Not at all, I'm proud of her," Joyce said.

- "Proud? Proud!? (laughs loudly) How can you be proud of the shame of the family!? She is useless, a piece of shit!"

- "You're drunk Uncle Jack, go away," Jane calmly intervened, a bit tired by all of this.

His wife grabbed him and brought him further before he could answer to Jane. The ceremony began, for Jane's biggest pleasure. During the religious prayers, everyone stood except Jane. Max thought it was because she was lost in her mind, but when she shook a bit her, Jane made a movement to tell her to leave her alone. Max didn't insist, Jane had never been into religion, and being here whereas it was against her volonte wasn't making it better.

When they left the church, a man with white hair and wearing a suit was waiting a bit far from the crowd. Jane recognised him, she told

Joyce, Max, Monique, and Robin to wait for her before approaching him.

- "The day is not shitty enough!? You have to be here too!?" Jane angrily replied.

- "Look, I wanted to apologize to you, I know I haven't been a good father for you—"

- "You're not my father! You're not even my step-father! You're just the man who married my mom!"

- "Okay! Okay, I'm sorry...Do you think you could forgive me? I mean, we had good moments together, right?" the man weakly smiled.

- "Oh yeah! When you grabbed my wrist so strongly that it broke, it was so fun! And when you abandoned me on a motorway service area, I laughed so hard! And when you shaved my head just to humiliate me, what amazing moments I had after that!" Jane angrily and ironically stated.

- "I'm sorry..."

- "I don't give a fuck! Just disappear! That's all I want!"

Jane walked away without letting him answer and joined the others.

- "Is everything okay?" Max asked.

- "Yeah, let's just finish this hell day!"

When Constance had been buried, it wasn't over for Jane. A lawyer was going to read her will with just the family. Joyce, Max, Robin, and Monique had to wait outside. They tried to listen what was going inside, but they heard nothing until a big exclamation from the inside and many people yelling. The door opened and a crowd of angry persons left the room.

- "What happened?" Monique frowned.

- "I have everything, and she gives them the right to go fuck themselves", Jane explained with a small proud smirk.

- "I recognise her in this."

- "She had a Bank account where she was saving lots of money on it for my futur, that's why they were all here."

The four women stayed dazed. How a family could hate one person at this point but still be interested of her money!? That was a shame!

The day was over. Joyce drove back Jane and Max to the brunette's apartment. Jane spent the night talking about her sister and showing Max some pictures.

- "Oh, I hate this picture," Jane told with a sad tone.

- "Why? You look cute," Max said.

- "It was my birthday, I've invited some friends for the day. We prepared everything with Constance, I was so excited! But...no one came, and I cried the entire day..."

- "Oh no...I'm so sorry..."

- "Yeah...But, to cheer me up, Constance took me to the movie theater and we watched like three movies, it was really cool."

After those memories, the two girls went to sleep, finishing this hell day.

## 67. The letter

When Jane came back to school, she was more than angry. She didn't want to go to class, but she missed too much already and staying alone in her empty apartment wasn't a good idea. Her eyes were in a constant red and puffy. She arrived at her locker to take her books when someone leaned next to her.

- "Hey," the blonde girl softly said.

Jane didn't even look at her. She didn't want to know what other plan she had against her, what weak part of her she was going to use against her to humiliate her one more time! But she didn't care anymore, nothing was important now!

- "I'm sorry, for your sister," Abigail began. "I, I've lost my sister four years ago, and...I know what you are living..."

Jane slammed her locker and turned her head, breathing heavily with her nose and closing hard her fists.

- "I don't give a fuck!" Jane got worked up. "Do you hear me!? You fucking bitch! You can go fuck yourself! (pushes her) YOU HAVE NO IDEA OF WHAT I'M LIVING! (pushes again but more brutally) I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR LIFE! I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR APOLOGISES! (pushes her) GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE! I DON'T WANNA SEE YOU!"

Troy ran to her and grabbed her by her waist to stop her while she was still yelling at Abigail and struggling in Troy's arms.

- "GO!" the boy ordered.

The blonde teen nodded and walked away quickly. Troy tightened his arms around her and forced her to sit on the floor. Jane stopped yelling, but she was still breathing heavily, with her mouth this time, with tears coming in her eyes.

- "Hey Jane, it's okay, it's okay," Troy softly said. "Did something happen?"



- "You know about my sister!?" Jane asked angrier than she thought.

- "Yeah...I'm sorry..."

- "Yesterday...I got a letter from the New-York police academy and...I've passed the tests..."

- "Oh Jane! It's amazing!"

- "No, it's not!" Jane told with tears falling. "I ran to her room but she wasn't there! It was empty! EMPTY!"

Jane broke down again, Troy still holding her tight. The second after, Max approached slowly them, with wide opened eyes, not understanding what was wrong. She knelt in front of her, gently grabbed her head, and placed it on her chest before wrapping her arms around.

- "What happened?" Max mouthed with a frown.

Troy tried to explain rapidly what happened in a murmur not sure if Jane wanted to hear that again.

- "I come back tonight," the redhead told.

- "No," Jane sniffed. "You'll have problems with Neil."

- "I don't give a fuck right now, you clearly need someone with you, I'm not letting you alone!"

Jane didn't insist, it was useless anyway, and she deeply wanted Max to stay with her. When she was alone, she was depressing.

- "Can I let her with you?" Max asked with an angry tone.

- "Of course," Troy answered.

Max kissed Jane's forehead before standing and walking away. She had kept all that anger inside her for weeks now but it was too much! Three halls later, she found her, at her locker. Max grabbed her by her shoulder and blocked her against the row of lockers.

- "You fucking stay away from her, okay!?" Max angrily began. "She is mourning, she lost her sister in a tragic accident, she is hardly dealing with that, she doesn't need you and your stupid face to make stupid « apologises » about her sister! You're not even sorry for what you did to her! You're sorry because your sister's death is still in your mind, but she doesn't need to know that! You totally destroy her because Troy was liking her more than you! You assaulted her whereas she was just walking in the forest and now she doesn't even want to walk next to it, you raped her in this fucking locker room where she had to cut a dick and the worst part was that she was feeling bad for it! She felt bad every day because of you and your stupid fucking sick mind! I don't even know why you're still here, you should be in jail or in a psychiatric hospital! She didn't want me to get revenge for her, but I promise, if you approach her one more time, if you talk to her, if you walk in the same hall as her, or if you even just look at her, you should better run. Am I clear!?"

Abigail quickly nodded with terrified eyes. Max brutally freed her. She needed a big strenght to not punch her in her face. She went back to Jane who was sitting against her locker with Troy next to her.

- "Where were you?" Jane asked with tears in her eyes.

- "I needed to talk to someone," Max answered, managing to calm down. "How are you?"

Jane shrugged. Max sat next to her. Troy was going to stand, but Max told him he could stay if he wanted. Of course, he accepted the invitation, wanting to support his friend. Jane managed to stop crying, she was between two persons she trusted, it was reassuring her a lot.

After class, Max went to her home. She was hoping to not see her mother and Neil but both of them were here. She went directly to her room, ignoring them, packed all her stuff, she didn't have really lots of things so it was fast. Once in the living room with all her bags, Neil and her mother looked at her with a frown.

- "Where are you going!?" Neil angrily asked like if he already knew the answer.

- "Why do you care!?" Max snapped.
- "Don't talk to me like that Maxine," the man threatened.
- "If you wanna know, I'm leaving, because I'm done of you and all your shit!"
- "Where are you going?" Susan asked with a weak voice.
- "With Jane."
- "This dyke!?" Neil stated.
- "Yes, this dyke, 'cause I'm a dyke too! She just lost her sister, she is sad, living something who should have never happened, and there is no way for me to let her live this alone! So, I packed my stuff and you won't see me again!"

- "Never?" the mother told with tears in her eyes.

- "Maybe if you both decide to not be assholes anymore! Billy disappeared for a reason and guess what!? I'm doing the same! I finish my school year and then I'll go in college far from both of you! And don't try to follow me or I'll let a complain against both of you!"

She didn't let them answer and quickly walked outside.

- "AND IT'S MAX!" the redhead yelled before slamming the door.

She heard some yells and cries coming from her house, but she didn't look back. They were part of her past now and she had to focus on Jane now.

She arrived at Jane's apartment and the brunette greeted her with a small smile.

- "Did it end bad?" Jane asked with a small voice.
- "I left my mom, it kinda ended bad, but I prefer being with you, until you want to get rid of me," Max answered.
- "Okay, I hope I won't have to get rid of you!"

- "Me neither!"

Jane hugged Max. She knew even if she wasn't feeling good with Neil and Susan, it was still hard to abandon her life like that. It was just for a few months anyway, they would probably go to different cities the next year.

## 68. The beginning of Summer

The end of the school year finished calmly. Neil and Susan didn't bother Jane and Max, the two girls still living together in her apartment, Max taking care of her girlfriend the best she could. They all passed their exams, more or less good, and were enjoying the beginning of the summer, together, at Lucas's house, for a barbecue. Dustin bought a new one and him and Jane were trying to build it.

- "No, it's not supposed to go here!" Dustin told.
- "But it doesn't go anywhere else!" Jane stated with an irritating tone.
- "It has to!"
- "Look at that! The wheels are perpendicular! It can't roll!"
- "It's not you who had 98 on 100 in Mechanics?" Dustin frowned.
- "It was on cars! Not on barbecues!"

A bit further, Lucas, Gabrielle, Bev, and Will were talking, standing on the grass, holding a cup in their hands.

- "When do you begin army?" Bev asked.
- "At the end of August, I can't wait!" the black boy excitedly told.
- "Well, I can!" said Gabrielle said.
- "I'm gonna be okay, the first years are for training, they won't send me to the front."
- "Yeah, if you say so."

Lucas wrapped his arm around his girlfriend and kissed her head. He knew she wasn't liking his dreaming job, but she was still supporting him anyway, it was all he needed. Will and Bev looked at each other with the same smile meaning they were finding them cute. They were cut by Jane and Dustin bringing the barbecue, held by the two

handles.

- "What happened to the wheels?" Will frowned.

- "We couldn't make better," Dustin sighed.

- "You didn't have 98 on 100 in Mechanics?" Lucas asked.

- "On cars! It was on goddamn cars!" Jane answered with the same irritated tone.

The friends chuckled while Jane playfully shook her head. Mike and Max were slowly walking to them, in a serious conversation.

- "How is Jane?" the black-haired boy asked.

- "Well, she cries every day, she tries to evacuate with boxing, but I see she is still not okay, I don't know what to do..."

- "You're with her, that's all you can do, and it's more than you think. At least she is not alone, she knows she has you, it's all you can do, she will be better."

- "I hope you're right!"

They arrived near the others and frowned at the barbecue.

- "You didn't have 98 on 100 in Mechanics?" Max stated.

- "It was on-oh fuck it!" Jane gave up.

The group giggled. Max gave Jane her drink and kissed her temple.

- "Well, let's the king of barbecues operates," Lucas told, cracking his fingers.

- "The king of barbecues? Really?" Mike said.

- "The last time the sausages burnt it was impossible to eat it!" Dustin stated.

- "Max ate them!" Beverly intervened.

- "I don't like wasting," Max replied.
- "Even Mike is better with barbecues," Will added.
- "Okay, I'll cook only for Gabrielle and Jane because I love only them," Lucas told, faking his upset.
- "Um...if they are right, I would prefer you to cook only for Jane!" Gabrielle joked.

They all turned to Jane who wasn't objecting.

- "I burnt water, I can survive to burnt sausages," Jane shrugged.

They all giggled before beginning the barbecue. Lucas, Gabrielle, Dustin, and Will were around the barbecue while Mike and Bev were sitting at the table and Jane and Max were standing a bit further.

- "So? You go to New-York?" Max asked, her arm on her shoulder and caressing her cheek.
- "Yeah...I have no other option and it's still a big opportunity," Jane answered with a sad smile.
- "Of course it is! You did it with a broken body, it's impressive!"
- "Yeah, maybe...you? Italy then?"
- "Yep, I'm gonna miss you..."
- "I'll miss you too...But I'll call you, and you'll call me, right?" Jane said.
- "Of course," Max softly smiled. "It won't be too long for you?"
- "I can wait, and you?"
- "I can wait too, I'll be too bother to learn how to make pizzas!"

Jane lightly chuckled. Max leaned to kiss her girlfriend.

Jane lost all her excitement to become a cop. It was a thing she was doing to make her sister proud of her and proud of herself, like to

show her she did well but now...It lost all its meaning. She would still try, but she didn't know if she wanted to. She was still feeling empty inside even if Max helped her a lot to mourn.

For now, the two girls wanted to enjoy their last summer with their friends before all going in different cities and living different lives. Not knowing what would happen to them.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Hi! So, this is the end of this story!

Thank you for reading my story, I hope you enjoyed it, don't hesitate to tell me in the comments what you thought about it :)

See you in another book :D

Sequel -> Ghost